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President: Mr. Opertti . . . . (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 160

Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/574 and Corr.1)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.43/Rev.1)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution on the global implications of the year 2000 (Y2K) date conversion of computers, contained in document A/53/L.43/Rev.1

The recent revolution in the field of information technology has not only altered all the areas of human activity but has also greatly contributed to global prosperity. Current trends clearly indicate that information technology will play a pivotal role in the economic growth and sustainable development of nations in the next millennium.

The interests of all nations and organizations require that communication and computer functions continue unhindered in the next century. Any disruption in these information systems could seriously impair global economic activities and push the global economy further towards crisis and depression.

Every minute that is ticking by is bringing us closer to the threat of the Y2K or millennium bug, which could plague our computer systems at the dawn of the new millennium. It was believed initially that the Y2K problem was confined to computer software alone. However, time has just brushed aside that notion. The parameters of Y2K are in a state of constant flux. With every passing day, a new area that may possibly be affected is being added to the list. The possible crash of embedded microchips used in various appliances and equipment and the interlinkages between computer systems have made the problem all the more complex and serious. This complexity has made it almost impossible to correctly gauge the havoc that the millennium bug could play in our lives.

Estimates about the possible fallout of the Y2K problem range from the conservative to the astronomical. Some predict total chaos and anarchy at the turn of the next century; others simply trivialize it by calling it a non-event. The truth lies between the two extremes, but nobody knows exactly where. The fact is that the problem is staring us in the face, and it has to be dealt with in an effective manner.

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The interlinkages of computer systems and the intertwined nature of the world economy necessitate a global response to this global threat. It would be wrong to presume that the developed nations, whose reliance on modern technology is heavy, will be the only victims of the millennium bug, as even those nations whose reliance on modern technology is minimal will be hurt by the fallout.

The global threat that the Y2K poses and the need for a global response bring into sharper focus the role of the United Nations and the international multilateral system. Efforts in the United Nations are two-pronged. The first relates to rectifying the computer systems within the United Nations system around the world. The progress on this front is heartening, as compliance is expected to be achieved within the rigid time-frame. Even so, no chances are being taken, and efforts are under way for subsequent crisis management.

The second relates to the situation in almost 200 Member and observer States of the United Nations, where the situation, regrettably, is not so heartening. On the one hand, developing countries took the problem rather too casually, labouring under the notion that they would somehow be insulated from the effects of this menace. On the other hand, some developed countries have been lax, and as a result several of them are now lagging behind. Both face the same challenge because of the deep interconnections in our global network of computer links.

Unfortunately, the awareness and action levels, particularly on issues like crisis management and contingency planning, have still not attained the required pace called for by the immutable deadline of 31 December 1999. There is a need to further highlight the Y2K problem in Member States and to exchange views on the overall status of remedial responses in each of them. To realize this primary objective, the Working Group on Informatics has organized a Y2K national coordinators' meeting to take place here at the United Nations on 11 December 1998. In addition to the national Y2K coordinators, members of the Permanent Missions and representatives of regional groupings have also been invited. This meeting will not only further international cooperation on Y2K and bring the national coordinators onto the same wavelength, but will also focus on pivotal issues like crisis management and contingency planning.

In order to focus proper attention on this problem and to highlight the need for concrete action, this matter is again being brought before the General Assembly. Accordingly, Pakistan has the honour to present draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1, which has been prepared as a result of wide consultations. The draft resolution welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. It requests the Member States to urgently increase their efforts to solve the Y2K problem and to appoint their respective national coordinators for this purpose. It calls on all Member States to work together to address the threats that the Y2K problem poses globally. It urges them to emphasize the importance of contingency planning and to develop plans to address possible large-scale failures in the public and private sectors. It expresses appreciation for the guidelines prepared by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998 and urges Member States to draw upon them.

The draft resolution further calls on the Secretary-General to ensure compliance within all parts of the United Nations system and calls for a monitoring and reporting system within the United Nations so that action can be completed well before the deadline. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations system closely monitors actual and potential sources of funding to support the efforts of the developing countries and countries with economies in transition to address the year 2000 problem. It expresses appreciation for the establishment of the trust fund by the World Bank to assist in the efforts to resolve the Y2K problem and for the substantial voluntary contributions made to it by the member States.

We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Donokusumo (Indonesia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the outset, the Group wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. It also wishes to express its gratitude to the Ad Hoc Working Group on Informatics for its valuable contributions to the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the Y2K issue. We are particularly grateful to the Chairman of the Working Group, Ambassador Ahmad Kamal, for the dynamic stewardship that he brings to the deliberations of the Working Group.

The nature of the Y2K problem and its implications for all countries makes it imperative to promote a degree of awareness among Member States. Given the indisputable fact that the Y2K problem is a global one having profound consequences for the entire global community, it requires concerted and intensified global efforts to rectify it within the immoveable time-frame.

In this regard, the Group notes with appreciation the efforts of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, including, in particular, its plan to hold the Y2K national coordinators meeting on 11 December 1998. The Group has also noted other achievements of the Working Group with regard to Y2K, such as the informatics symposiums, the suggested guidelines for addressing the Y2K problem adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 1998 substantive session and its frequent newsletters and circulars which keep Member States abreast of the latest activities and useful information about the Working Group. Such initiatives will not only create a level of awareness of the problem but will also help in dealing with it in an effective manner. In this regard, it cannot be denied that even greater efforts need to be exerted, including regional workshops on Y2K and related issues such as contingency planning and crisis management, thereby assisting the developing States to confront this issue effectively.

Developing States, unfortunately, lack adequate resources to deal with a problem of such magnitude. Furthermore, since developing countries will be the most negatively impacted due to their vulnerable position, they will need assistance both in the form of technical know-how and financial resources in order to effectively tackle those effects. In the increasing globalized world of contemporary times, the failures of the developing world to address the problem effectively would be bound to have contagious consequences for the rest of the world.

It was therefore most appropriate and relevant that the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/233, and the draft resolution before us today also requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations system closely monitors actual and potential sources of funding to support the efforts of the developing countries to address the year 2000 problem and to facilitate the dissemination of relevant information on those funding possibilities to the Member States.

The Group has noted that at last year's session the resolution on this item was adopted by consensus. The resolution of the Economic and Social Council on "Suggested guidelines for addressing the year 2000 problem of computers" was also adopted by consensus. We are pleased to lend our support to the draft resolution before us.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country, Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Liechtenstein and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union believes that there are two main aspects to the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers that merit the full attention of the General Assembly. First, we have to make certain that the United Nations will be Y2K compliant in time. Secondly, we have to draw the attention of all Member States and, in particular, of developing countries, to the importance and potential negative impact of the millennium bug.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report A/53/574 and its clear and concise presentation both of the problem itself and of the remedial steps taken by the Secretariat so far. We are satisfied that the Secretariat is addressing the issue properly, and we would hope that the existing momentum will be maintained to ensure that all potentially affected systems throughout the United Nations will continue to work as they should on 1 January 2000. We are particularly happy to note that the importance of the domino effect is being duly recognized: it will indeed be essential to identify to what extent the United Nations will be affected by non-Y2K-compliant external partners.

In contrast to the situation in the Secretariat, awareness of the seriousness of the problem seems to differ appreciably among Member States. This is where the European Union sees the real importance of today's debate. We would hope that delegations report extensively to their capitals and try to get the message across to the competent authorities that the millennium bug has to be addressed urgently and in a coordinated fashion.

On Friday the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics will gather national coordinators on the

Y2K problem. The European Union appreciates the remarkable efforts of the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, in his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group, in organizing this upcoming meeting and acknowledges the substantial support offered by the host country. We look forward to this meeting, which should allow a valuable exchange of information between national coordinators. In our view, this sort of networking is indispensable if we are to minimize the impact of the millennium bug.

Nobody, even if they are absolutely certain of the Y2K compatibility of their own systems, can afford to be complacent. We should like to underline the importance of giving priority to mission-critical systems, and, given the growing realization that we will not be able to eradicate the millennium bug before the end of next year, we must stress that contingency planning will be crucial for quickly overcoming the inevitable problems. As part of this, it is important to consider the implications for national infrastructures of possible cross-border supply-chain failures. While the Y2K problem may appear to be overstated for various reasons by people with vested interests, it would be a terrible mistake to underestimate it.

Before concluding, I should like to thank Ambassador Kamal for presenting the draft resolution before us, which reflects the constructive spirit prevailing in the Working Group and its technical sub-group and which the European Union therefore fully supports.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): The key question on our minds today is a simple one: is the Y2K problem a serious one or is it not? What I hope to demonstrate in my remarks today is that this is a serious but not necessarily apocalyptic problem, unless we choose to ignore it.

By now the origins of the Y2K problem are well known. It began as a small, technical oversight in the 1960s, when computer programmers, in an effort to save computer memory, designed systems which recorded only the last two digits of the year. For example, 1970 was recorded as "70". This will create problems as we approach the year 2000, as the computers will not be able to distinguish between the years 1900 and 2000.

Peter de Jaeger, who has studied the Y2K problem since 1991, illustrated the problem with a simple, vivid example:

> "I was born in 1955. If I ask the computer to calculate how old I am today, it subtracts 55 from 98 and announces that I'm 43 ... But what happens in the year 2000? The computer will subtract 55 from 00 and will state that I am minus 55 years old. This error will affect any calculation that produces or uses time spans ... If you want to sort by date (e.g. 1965, 1905, 1966), the resulting sequence would be 1905, 1965, 1966. However, if you add in a date record such as 2015, the computer, which reads only the last two digits of the date, sees 05, 15, 65, 66 and therefore sorts them incorrectly."

In some cases, the problem may result in nothing more than ridiculous but inconsequential miscalculations. Perhaps we will be overcharged on our credit card bills, or perhaps our ages will be wrongly reflected in hospital records. These are inconvenient but not necessarily life-threatening problems. However, in other cases, Y2K could have serious economic or even fatal results.

We do not as yet completely understand the full implications of the Y2K problem. However, the first symptoms have already shown themselves. At the British department store Marks and Spencer in London, a computer destroyed tons of food when it misread the expiry date of 2002 as the year 1902 and thought that the food had expired 96 years earlier. Similar problems have occurred at other warehouses with similar computers. Cash registers are also known to have crashed because they were unable to handle credit cards with expiry dates in the year "00", that is the year 2000.

There is a dangerous myth that the Y2K problem is faced mainly by developed countries and that developing countries, with their lower use of technology, will not be seriously affected. This myth is sustained by writings that depict Y2K as a problem that affects only the most technologically advanced countries. For instance, the *New York Times* best-seller *Time Bomb 2000: What the Year 2000 Computer Crisis Means to You!* said that "approximately 50 per cent of the human race, particularly in large sections of China and Africa, has never made a phone call, so not everyone would be affected" by the Y2K problem. This myth is dangerous because it can lull developing countries into a false sense of security.

Paradoxically, it is the most technologically advanced countries with the greatest number of computers that are likely to be the least affected by the Y2K problem. Most developed countries are already well on their way in preparing themselves for Y2K. The *Financial Times* reported last week that the United States had made 61 per cent progress towards addressing the Y2K problem in the financial sector, while Germany, France and the United Kingdom had made 54 per cent, 49 per cent and 47 per cent progress respectively. Of the organizations in the United States that were surveyed, only 1 per cent would not be able to complete their preparations by 1 January 2000.

In contrast, many developing countries are only just realizing the potential problems of Y2K. Ms. Joyce Amenta, former Director of the United Nations Information Technology Services Division, has said that developing countries have "insufficient resources to ... fix the Year 2000 problem". Ms. Amenta predicted that in developing countries, "fear will start to hit next year. People will start to take their money out of the bank". This would lead to "further and further paralysis as we get closer to the date".

Developing countries are thus not immune from the Y2K problem. The problem can affect any equipment that involves date calculations, including computer systems that deal with payrolls, telecommunications, aviation, sewage, interest rates and banking systems, just to name a few examples. For example, a sewage system that releases waste into the sea at different times every day depending on tidal flows might stop working if its computer calendar cannot recognize the year 00. Any country which uses electricity or has a bank, an airline or a telephone network will have to check to see if its systems are Y2K-compliant. Otherwise, on 1 January 2000, those services might cease to operate.

The key problem here is that there is no instant, miracle cure for the Y2K problem. The *Financial Times* reported last week that the Intel Corporation, the world's largest manufacturer of computer processors, has discovered that there are no magic fixes to the Y2K problems. According to Mr. Louis Burns, Intel's chief information officer, the problem can only be solved by good, hard, rigorous work and by paying attention to detail. Adding two digits to the date field in a computer program is not technically difficult. The difficulty comes in trying to identify all the points in the computer program where dates are critical and have to be changed, and how the different programs relate to one another. This is a highly time-consuming process, and time is running out.

At the United Nations, it is not uncommon for us to defer an agenda item when no simple solution exists. Unfortunately, Y2K is a deadline we cannot postpone. We cannot bury our heads and wish it away. Like a meteorite hurtling towards us, Y2K will strike in exactly 389 days' time. We cannot avoid it, and it is by now too late to try to reprogram every piece of computer equipment. Capers Jones, head of Software Productivity Research, Inc., has estimated that finding, fixing and testing all Y2K-affected software would require over 700,000 person-years. There are just not enough qualified people or hours to completely eradicate the problem. However, we can work together to minimize the damage.

My delegation is therefore pleased that the United Nations has decided to discuss the global implications of the Y2K problem at this session of the General Assembly. We need to raise global awareness of the Y2K problem so that we can all be prepared for it when it strikes. We are also pleased that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council will be meeting on 11 December 1998 with national Y2K coordinators to discuss how to deal with the Y2K problem. Singapore will be sending its national coordinator to that meeting.

Allow me also briefly to share some of the steps that Singapore has taken to address the problem at the national level. In the public sector, all government agencies have been instructed to complete the conversion of affected systems by the end of this year, leaving the whole of 1999 for testing. In the private sector, we have provided grants to help small and medium-sized companies defray up to 70 per cent of their Y2K implementation consultancy costs. We have also established a Web site to provide more information to the public on the problems of Y2K.

Singapore also strongly supports international efforts to battle the Y2K problem. In March next year, the Association of Banks in Singapore will be hosting the Global 2000 meeting in Singapore. In South-East Asia, the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) is leading a Y2K task force of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to consider how the Y2K problem might affect air safety and air traffic control. Within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC), the CAAS initiated a survey of actions taken by APEC countries to resolve the Y2K problem in air traffic control and airport systems. The CAAS also participated in the International Civil Aviation Organization Asia-Pacific Y2K task force. Singapore stands ready to share whatever information we have, so that we can work together to meet the challenges of Y2K.

Finally, to end on a positive note, while Y2K is a genuine problem, it has also resulted in some excessive paranoia. Some groups, for example, have urged people to empty their bank accounts and stock up on food, water and weapons before the turn of the century. There is no reason for such hysteria, which would only add to the problem. Y2K is a technical glitch with potentially serious consequences, but it need not be apocalyptic. This is a problem that we should all prepare ourselves for and take in our stride. Y2K is the first challenge that the United Nations will have to face on the first day of the new millennium. If we work together, we can ensure that the new millennium takes off on a positive note.

My delegation supports the draft resolution just introduced by my good friend Ambassador Kamal.

Mr. Khare (India): We would like at the outset fully to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the Secretary-General for his informative and comprehensive report, document A/53/574, on steps taken within the United Nations to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. We would also like to thank the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council for its work.

We have carefully studied the report of the Secretary-General and greatly appreciate his indication that the year 2000 problem is not limited to computer systems. In fact, it will affect a large number of electronic systems that involve microprocessors based on dates. Furthermore, the possibility of a cascading or domino effect could result in significant disruptions in the economy and in the structures of governance. Increased interdependence and globalization ensure that none of us will be immune from this danger, unless all of us are year 2000-compliant, at least in systems deemed to be mission-critical. Of course, what is not mission-critical in one system could easily prove to be mission-critical in another which is only peripherally linked to it.

In our view, in order to provide sufficient time for testing solutions that may have been applied, the target date for year 2000 compliance cannot be 1 January 2000, but some time in the middle of next year. We have therefore noted with appreciation that at United Nations Headquarters the personal computers, the operating system and commercial software in the mainframe systems managed by the International Computing Centre in Geneva and the integrated management information system (IMIS) application are already fully year-2000-compliant. We have also noted the steps being taken by United Nations offices away from Headquarters.

We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts towards contingency planning based on the recognition outlined in paragraph 29 of his report that,

> "Even if the power supply and telecommunications infrastructure operated by the United Nations are fully compliant, links to external systems make them vulnerable."

We agree with the Secretary-General that the basic paradigm of contingency planning through resort to external resources does not apply in this case, since the problem is truly global.

India has made major strides in the introduction of information technology in the last decade. The Government has been a leading player in the use of this technology to improve the quality and speed of decision-making and services. Computerization has also been extensive in such key sectors of the economy as banks, stock exchanges, trade and industry. With such an extensive application of information technology in various sectors in the country, India has been at the forefront of developing cost-effective solutions to the problem. At the same time, we have also taken several steps to address the problem adequately within India. It has been variously estimated that the extent of the problem within India is roughly 0.33 per cent of the global problem and would require around $2 billion to redress. Allow me to briefly highlight some of the actions taken by us in this direction.

The Government has established a high-level task force to manage the impact of the year 2000 problem in the country. It will be chaired by Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, member of the Planning Commission, and includes members of both the Government and the public and private sectors, in order to act as a central nodal coordination agency. It will also manage a Rs 7 billion corpus fund to address the problem in the government sector.

The National Informatics Centre, the premier organization in the country in the Government sector serving the information technology needs of the central Government, state governments, as well as district-level administration, in early 1997 started the exercise of assessing the impact of the year 2000 problem on its products and services. Most of its services are already Y2K-compliant and those which are not will be made so by the end of this year.

Recognizing the cascading impact on the economy of Y2K failures in the banking sector, the Reserve Bank of India — the country's central bank — has established a working group chaired by its Deputy Governor to monitor compliance through regular fortnightly reviews. The objective is to ensure that all such systems are fully compliant by the end of this year at the latest. Two essential criteria that would need to be fulfilled for a bank to be fully compliant are that its system should behave rationally when given dates after 31 December 1999 under real-time conditions and that it must be capable of tackling the leap-year factor of 2000.

The central bank indicated on 10 November 1998 that it will take penal measures against errant banks if need be and will carry out on-site supervisory examinations for verification. Banks will also have to furnish their contingency plans and provide compliance reports on their web sites for public information. Banks have also been advised to continuously validate their renovated systems, commencing 1 October this year, through testing with reference to critical dates. About 44 of the 104 commercial Indian banks and 12 of the 41 non-banking financial institutions were already Y2K-compliant by 30 September 1998. It is our expectation that 90 Indian banks will be fully compliant by 31 December 1998 and that all banks as well as financial institutions will be compliant soon thereafter.

Many airlines are not very clear as to whether or not they will fly on 1 January 2000. Air India, our national carrier, initiated action to ensure 100 per cent Y2K compliance well in advance. All its personal computers, aircraft, accounting packages and airport software were made fully compliant by April this year. Although Air India is Y2K-compliant internally, external linkages have to be borne in mind. It has therefore written to airports around the world where it operates to inquire about their status.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India has initiated a Y2K-preparedness project, which is a time-bound schedule for a comprehensive plan to combat the problem. Exchanges will have to submit monthly reports on measures initiated by them and to become fully compliant by June 1999. The National Stock Exchange, which has 1,700 trading terminals in over 200 cities, is not only updating all its internal systems and software supplied to members but is also insisting that the members' back-office systems that interface with the national stock exchange system must also be Y2K-compliant.

In India we strongly believe that the problem should not be perceived simply as one related to the date of 1 January 2000. It would also be important for the solutions to recognize that the year 2000 is a leap year, as opposed to the year 1900, which was not. We are also concerned about other dangerous dates such as 9 September 1999, which is recognized by a non-compliant 6-digit date system as 990909. In fact, the General Insurance Company of India has indicated to all through widespread advertisements that claims arising out of Y2K or other dangerous dates such as that of 9 September 1999 would not be admissible. This has led to renewed vigour in public- and private-sector companies to effectively tackle the problem and reduce their liabilities. Several private-sector companies have already become Y2K- compliant. The Confederation of Indian Industry has set up a task force on the issue. It is also providing links on its web page for Y2K solutions. The National Association of Software and Services Companies is also taking a leading role in disseminating information, both in India and abroad, about Y2K-solution providers.

India is committed to effectively tackling the problem within its boundaries and to be of assistance, through its software companies and professionals, to other countries. In the same spirit, allow me to join others in commending Ambassador Ahmad Kamal for his work and in supporting the draft resolution before us.

Ms. Figuera (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation would first of all like to express its thanks to the Secretary-General for his report on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, A/53/574. We would also like to underscore the important work accomplished by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and especially to congratulate its Chairman, Ambassador Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan, whose dedication and commitment to the work entrusted to him has generated a productive dynamism in the Working Group. In terms of concrete results, that Working Group has been one of the most successful groups created by the Organization in recent years.

The advent of the new millennium has given rise to great expectations in all areas of human development, from the most specialized to the most mundane. Nevertheless, despite our growing dependence on information technology we have not paused to give serious thought to the grave effects of the year 2000 computer problem. Little over a year from the new millennium, little is known about the problem and even less about what has been done to resolve it in time.

In spite of the efforts deployed within the Organization, which have been reflected in various documents of the Economic and Social Council and in the adoption of resolution 52/233, we are still largely in the dark as to the potential repercussions of this problem on day-to-day productive activities and its effect on our basic industries, air traffic control radar and air traffic, customs and ports, health-care systems, and hospitals and intensive-care wards, among others.

Although applying timely corrective measures is up to Governments, the United Nations has a fundamental role to play in helping to disseminate information on the problem. Equally urgent is the devising of national contingency plans such as technical and financial assistance and support by multilateral agencies for developing countries. One important step in this direction is the meeting of national coordinators for the year 2000 computer problem, which will be held on 11 December here at the United Nations. We are pleased to see that the Organization is playing an active role in this respect by bringing together national experts to exchange ideas and mutually benefit from the progress already achieved by the members of the international community.

In the case of my country, Venezuela, I should like to note the establishment of a national governmental computer network known as the platinum network, through which one can obtain from reliable sources extensive documentation on the year 2000 date conversion problem. In addition, a survey has been prepared on the Internet whose objective is to gauge how much the people know about the problem, so that governmental campaigns can be properly focused to provide information on the effects of the year 2000 problem on the most critical areas.

The technological gap between developing and developed countries has always existed. That is beyond our immediate control. Unfortunately, in an increasingly globalized and techno-dependent world, that gap could have negative consequences. The international community has a deadline for solving the year 2000 problem — 31 December 1999 — and the draft resolution before us today represents an important step towards publicizing this fact. My delegation fully supports the draft, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): All of humankind agrees that the achievements realized in the field of informatics over the past few years at times surpass what had been imagined by scientists or by science-fiction writers.

The achievements registered in this field have opened the way to further progress by humankind. New conditions have been created that, if wisely used, will alleviate human suffering and contribute to promoting the realization of development and to reinforcing international cooperation based on the Charter of the United Nations, international legitimacy and a just peace.

The delegation of Syria supports the statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would like in particular to express our appreciation for the efforts made by Ambassador Ahmad Kamal and for the dynamism with which he conducted the work of the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics. Those efforts are aimed at raising the awareness of the international community concerning the year 2000 date conversion problem and the measures to be taken. We welcome the Secretary-General's report submitted under agenda item 160 on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. We welcome also the steps taken within the United Nations system to address this problem in a timely manner.

In recent months, we have learned more about the year 2000 problem. All opinions in this field indicate that the problem is of a dual nature. On the one hand, it is a technical problem whose timely solution will require creative efforts; on the other, it is a huge financial problem. We have learned that resolving it will cost tens of billions of dollars.

While we call for cooperation among specialists from different parts of the world, who should work jointly to address this problem in a timely manner, and while we believe that a solution has become available to some computer systems in certain countries, we call also for finding ways to enable the developing countries to resolve this problem without adding to their budgets financial burdens they cannot bear. We believe that industrial companies and international financial organizations could bear the costs of solving this problem in the developing countries.

The delegation of Syria hopes that the United Nations regional, economic and social commissions will give top priority to the resolution of this problem, following the example of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its fifty-fourth session.

We believe that the meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, to be held on 11 December, will make a constructive contribution in this field. In this respect, we look forward to reinforcing this kind of cooperation in the financial and technical fields.

The Syrian Arab Republic attaches great importance to the question of the year 2000 compliance of electronic and computer systems. The Syrian Government, at its meeting held on 30 March 1998, discussed this question and adopted decisions and measures requesting all parties to work together to find a solution to this problem. It decided also to ask the ministers to form committees under their leadership to follow up the question of year 2000 compliance. Those committees could resort to the help of experts and consultants in carrying out studies, holding training sessions and raising awareness of the problem. It also asked the administrations of various public sector institutions, companies and organizations to submit reports on the year 2000 compliance status of their electronic systems. If year 2000 compliance has not been achieved, committees will be established to assess the effect of non-compliance on those systems and possible solutions, and also to ensure that those solutions will enable the systems effectively to achieve year 2000 compliance.

The Syrian scientific committee on informatics plays an important role in our efforts to find a solution to this problem. Efforts are being made to increase awareness and disseminate information in order to make computers accessible to all citizens and establishments.

The delegation of Syria supports the draft resolution submitted under this item, and we believe that its adoption by the General Assembly will increase the momentum of international efforts to address the Y2K date conversion problem. We are going to participate in the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Informatics and wish that meeting all possible success.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Resolution 52/233, on the "Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers", adopted during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, gave us a clear idea of all kinds of difficulties that States throughout the world might experience if practical steps are not taken to deal with this problem.

In view of the measures and initiatives taken both within the United Nations and by Member States, it would be reasonable to be optimistic regarding this phenomenon which could affect all aspects of our lives.

Senegal would like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on this item and the various steps taken by the United Nations system that seek to ensure the proper functioning of the essential systems of the Organization and, at the same time, to promote effective international cooperation in this area.

This is also the moment to commend the outstanding work done by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council, under the dynamic chairmanship of Ambassador Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan. The recommendations submitted by that group have enabled Member States both to evaluate more clearly the computer problem as we approach the next millennium and also to try to guard against the disturbing consequences it might have on most activities.

Aware of the importance of computers as an indispensable tool for development, Senegal very early on, in 1990, established a ministry for State modernization, with an information-technology branch. This body, supported by international cooperation — in particular, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — already has a national programme coordinator for the transition to the year 2000.

A regulating body called the pilot committee has also been set up to elaborate a national strategy for transition to the year 2000. This body supervises technical committees charged with follow-up and with managing problems in various sectors such as energy, water, administration, small and medium-sized businesses, banks, and so forth. A centre for resources and a forum have also been created to allow the fruitful and effective exchange of information at the national level.

Thus Senegal is preparing to face the difficulties involved in computer conversion to the year 2000, and its national coordinator will take part in the meeting of the Working Group on Informatics planned for 11 December

1998. That meeting, one year before the transition to the year 2000, will take a look at all the various steps taken or planned and will also provide further evidence, in this time of globalization, that our world is a global village and that cooperation — in all fields, and the computer field in particular — has become an inescapable necessity.

The interest shown by our Organization in this issue leads to a certain optimism regarding the capacity of our States to deal successfully with this challenge arising at the threshold of twenty-first century. Senegal, like the other African countries, considers this a real challenge. We Africans understand that the threat posed by the computer transition to the next millennium requires collective action on both the national and global levels and that the global dimension of this threat, with all its implications, requires that we take a joint approach in order to achieve an overall solution.

For all of these reasons, my delegation supports draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1, which, in fact, is the result of broad consultations, and we hope that all Member States will support this important draft.

Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho): Let me begin by acknowledging the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, with which I fully associate myself.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for the concise report on the subject of global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, contained in document A/53/574. The Secretary-General has admirably met the expectations of General Assembly resolution 52/233 adopted last year.

It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to the valiant work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council, under the able leadership of Ambassador Kamal, and of its technical sub-group. The technical sub-group, bringing together members of missions and Secretariat staff, has worked tirelessly to draw our attention to the critical nature of the action required to address the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, other equipment and systems based on embedded chips. As we all now know, the list of such systems is very long and covers a wide variety of activities vital to any country's economy.

The digitization of telecommunications and the convergence of telecommunications and computers in the past few years has been one of the truly watershed phenomena of the present century and has provided the main impetus for the process of globalization. On numerous occasions and in various forums, the impact of globalization on the world economy, in particular its consequences for the economies of developing countries, has been a frequent mantra. Globalization has spawned a new economy — a tele-economy driven by computers. The smooth running of computers is, therefore, critically important not only for national economies but for the networked global economy as well.

As developing countries struggle to grapple with the complex rules of the new global trading system under the World Trade Organization, they pay scant attention to such seemingly arcane phenomena as the Y2K, or the "millennium bug", as it is popularly known. Small wonder, then, that all surveys find that developing countries are lagging behind in their appreciation of, and strategies for dealing with, the date conversion problem of their computer systems. How could it be otherwise when even a large number of industrialized countries evince the same lethargy?

It is said that some European countries have not paid the necessary attention to the problem because of their preoccupation with a higher priority — namely, the launching of the euro in four weeks' time. But we all know that such an attitude is unfortunate, as the one year remaining can prove to be grossly inadequate for remedying the neglect.

As the representative of Indonesia said on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, developing countries have weak coping mechanisms and will need considerable assistance from their more developed partners in the form of financial, technological and technical assistance for formulating correct strategies, as well as for carrying them out.

My delegation, therefore, strongly supports draft resolution A/53/L.43, especially in its request to the Secretary-General to take steps:

> "to ensure that the United Nations system closely monitors actual and potential sources of funding to support the efforts of the developing countries and countries with economies in transition to address the year 2000 problem".

In this context, my delegation is deeply appreciative of the efforts being made by United Nations system bodies, such as the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP), the regional commissions and the World Bank, to raise awareness of the magnitude of the problem among their client countries and to help them find solutions to it.

Lesotho and other member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have benefited from the initiatives of the World Bank in organizing awareness-raising seminars for the region and providing financing for strategic planning through its Information for Development Program (infoDev) project.

As is often the case when epidemics such as the "millennium bug" occur, there are sceptics who downplay its effects. In this case, it is certainly better to err on the side of caution, because the domino effect that the collapse or malfunction of computer systems in one part of the world can have in other remote parts to which they are connected through global networks could spell disaster of truly global proportions.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Japan welcomes the introduction of the draft resolution on the year 2000 date conversion problem. We also commend the contributions made by the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, under the able leadership of Ambassador Kamal. The Working Group has contributed to directing the urgent attention of the Organization to this problem of the year 2000 date conversion. It is a problem that should be addressed in a concerted manner by the United Nations system, Member States, the public and private sectors and civil society.

Computers affect our lives today in an infinite number of ways. Sometimes we are not even aware of the extent to which we depend upon them. The date conversion problem of computers has wide-ranging effects on economic and social infrastructures, such as power supply, telecommunications, transportation, the financial system, public health and so forth. Lacking a well-functioning infrastructure, no business or government agency can operate successfully. Unless every nation shares its experiences in dealing with the year 2000 problem and coordinates the effort, the result may be worldwide confusion.

Today, fewer than 400 days are left before the year 2000. The United Nations must send out a clear and strong message to the international community. Using both multilateral and bilateral forums, we must heighten public awareness of the importance and urgency of the Y2K problem and take all possible measures to deal with it.

At the G-8 Summit in Birmingham in May of this year, heads of Government agreed to coordinate their Y2K activities, which have as their primary objective further awareness-raising and encouraging Governments to take action.

In Japan, in September of this year, the Government adopted a national Y2K Action Plan and requested both the public and private sectors to cooperate in its implementation. Under this national Action Plan, ministries and agencies will take necessary measures in accordance with the conversion guidelines we established and will complete their simulation tests on systems with high priority that are directly related to the daily lives of people by the end of June 1999. The ministries and agencies will also set up contingency plans explicitly covering the shut-downs, malfunctions and other contingencies for all priority systems on 1 January 2000 and will encourage all corporations to conduct independent check-ups at their own initiative, in accordance with the Private Industry Y2K Check List.

No nation is free from the Y2K problem. It affects all nations and has an enormous potential cross-border impact. Global cooperation is therefore essential to deal with this potentially serious impact. The United Nations is expected to take the initiative in promoting this end and in ensuring that all the nations of the world are prepared to meet this challenge. It is often said that developing countries lag behind developed countries in taking preventive measures. There is a growing need, therefore, to have an overall picture of global preparedness. In this regard, we hope that the special meeting of the Working Group on Informatics on 11 December will provide an important opportunity to discuss measures for international cooperation on the Y2K problem.

For these reasons, Japan supports the draft resolution on the year 2000 date conversion problem that we have before us.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): I am speaking on behalf of Ambassador Betty King. The United States is pleased to support the draft resolution on the global implications of the year 2000 problem of computers. With only 389 days left until the new millennium is upon us, this is a topic that is of utmost concern to all of us.

Some people may still believe that the effects of the year 2000, or Y2K, problem will be confined within the computer industry. Others do not know the meaning of

Y2K. For those of us who are not familiar with the intricacies of computer technology, it is hard to understand how our lives, and the lives of individuals around the world, can be affected by a computer problem. The reality is that systems for telecommunications, water, manufacturing, air transport, shipping, power and almost every other area risk serious disruption or failure if left untreated. Even some local traffic lights and grocery store cash registers could be affected.

The Y2K problem will affect every nation and will serve to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the world we live in. The time constraints, paired with the tremendous financial and personnel resources needed to address the Y2K problem around the world, truly make this a global challenge. Every nation must take the responsibility to ensure that its critical systems are Y2K compliant and that local Governments and private sectors are solving their Y2K problems. We must focus on international cooperation and share information on the status of Y2K readiness in our respective countries.

The United States Government began a coordinated effort to fix its systems in 1995. We appointed a national Y2K coordinator in February of 1998 who is responsible for overseeing the Government's response to the problem. This includes reaching out to local Governments, the private sector and international entities to promote action on the problem and to offer support to Y2K efforts. Virtually every key sector in the United States has mounted aggressive efforts to address the problem, but it is clear that much work remains. We are committed to our national programme as well as to working with other nations as part of the global effort.

The guidelines for addressing the year 2000 problem of computers, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in July this year, highlight the seriousness of the problem and provide useful information on problem solutions and contingency planning. The United States endorses these guidelines and calls for their broad dissemination, as requested by the General Assembly.

The United States looks forward to the meeting of Y2K national coordinators convened by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, which will be held here at the United Nations on Friday, 11 December 1998. The meeting will be attended by over 100 national coordinators or their representatives and will focus on information-sharing and international cooperation to solve Y2K problems on the national, regional and international levels. The United States hopes for the broadest participation in this important event.

The Secretary-General's report in document A/53/574, entitled "Steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers" and requested by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, notes that significant efforts have been made within the Secretariat to address the Y2K problem. The report, outlining the status of compliance in various elements of the technological infrastructure, indicates, however, that many areas have yet to be assessed. The report identifies corrective actions which have yet to be taken, raising serious concerns about the ability of the Organization to complete these actions within the necessary time-frame. The United States believes that the United Nations system needs an information management strategy to deal with system-wide problems, of which Y2K is one example.

Our delegation urges Member States to step up national and international activities to reach Y2K compliance and urges the United Nations Secretariat to take all necessary actions to ensure that this Organization can continue to function effectively without interruption to maintain the trust and support of the nations and people of the world.

Mr. Moraga (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The international dimension of the year 2000 computer problem is as complex as its national. That is why the Government of Chile has incorporated this item on the international agenda into its foreign policy.

President Frei has made concrete proposals to the Southern Cone Common Market, the Rio Group, the Ibero-American Summit, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and, at a bilateral level, Argentina. The global interdependence of systems associated with transport services, energy, telecommunications, defence, finance, borders, health and supplies, among others, require resolute and urgent international cooperative action at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

In the global context of the world economy, a country can no longer remain indifferent to events elsewhere in the world. The international challenge represented by the change of millenniums obliges every country to work with others in a responsible, transparent and timely way. This task should not be carried out only with one's geographical neighbours; one's "virtual" neighbours must be taken into account as well.

In order for this joint work to be effective, it is necessary in advance for each country to have adopted the measures necessary to ensuring its own operational continuity and compliance with commitments undertaken as a purchaser and/or strategic provider of goods and services. We understand that bilateral or multilateral cooperation consists of developing joint efforts and activities to ensure the uninterrupted supply and provision of international services related to oil and gas pipelines, electrical networks, satellites, fibre optics, financial operations, border crossings, the operation of ports and airports, and so on.

It is very possible that not all systems will be corrected before the deadline. It is therefore likely that there will be some difficulties after and even before the change of date. Our current work should be aimed at reducing those difficulties to a minimum. We must prioritize our action to ensure the uninterrupted provision to the population of such vital basic services as light, water, gas, telephones and health care. If only one system can be corrected, we feel that the electrical system should be targeted.

Given these circumstances, Ambassador Ahmad Kamal's initiative to convene, on 11 December, a meeting on the year 2000 computer problem is a worthy one. The Government of Chile is committed to supporting that meeting and to promoting action to strengthen the work of the United Nations Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics. This will make it possible to implement the actions that result from agreements that are reached next Friday.

The draft resolution before the Assembly on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers will help to promote the international action made necessary by the advent of the new millennium. The Government of Chile expresses its support for the draft resolution.

Ms. Cardoze (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In its capacity as this year's Coordinator of the Rio Group, the delegation of Panama is honoured to speak on agenda item 160, "Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers".

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The member States of the Rio Group wish to express their appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report in document A/53/574, which presents the steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. Likewise, the member States of the Rio Group wish to congratulate the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council for all the efforts to make Member States, in particular the developing countries, aware of the year 2000 computer problem. We wish to highlight the tireless leadership of the Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Ahmad Kamal, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, whose dynamism has led to a meeting of national coordinators on the computer millennium problem to be held at United Nations Headquarters on 11 December 1998.

Panama had the honour of presiding over the 88th meeting of the General Assembly on 26 June 1998, when resolution 52/233 was adopted on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers.

The Rio Group wishes to express its full support for the statement made on this item by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the countries of the Group of 77 and China.

The Rio Group underscores with appreciation the work accomplished by the Working Group on Informatics, which has emphasized the importance of making Governments aware of the year 2000 problem and of making small companies and local governmental agencies realize the complexity of the subject, as well as the importance of close cooperation between Governments and the private sector, not only at the national level but also at the international level.

For the Rio Group, the guidelines proposed by the Working Group to deal with the year 2000 computer problem are far- reaching and significant because they contain the necessary elements to raise awareness of the year 2000 problem, to assess the problem and possible solutions and to plan for unforeseeable situations.

In conclusion, allow me to point out that the heads of State and Government of the member States of the Rio Group, who met in September 1998 in Panama, emphasized the year 2000 computer problem:

> "The dawn of the third millennium will bring a change in the digits of dates stored in computer systems. This fact could have grave consequences in view of the heavy interdependence of information

> systems, not only nationally but worldwide. Accordingly, we support the adoption of measures to prevent and overcome this problem, especially in relation to systems under our own control, thereby creating the conditions to ensure the basic operational capacity of national systems and promoting and supporting relevant actions in the private sector. We will encourage the exchange of know-how and experience to reduce risks and enhance savings in this effort."

The member States of the Rio Group therefore urge the industrialized countries to contribute with technology and means to resolve this problem. The Rio Group supports the draft resolution in document A/53/L.43/Rev.1.

Mr. Suh Dae-won (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea is acutely aware of the threat the 2000 date conversion problem of computers poses to a vastly interconnected world. Indeed, our economies, telecommunications and transportation systems are all interlinked, making this issue a global challenge. As the date 31 December 1999 represents an unavoidable deadline, my delegation welcomes the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council in raising the level of awareness of the "millennium bug".

It is clear that the urgency of this problem and the rapid nearing of the year 2000 require that the international community work in unison and effectively. This effort will demand a great deal of technical expertise and financial resources. Therefore, we encourage our fellow Member States, the public and the private sectors and civil society to work together to tackle this threat. We hope that the United Nations system will be at the forefront in taking the necessary measures so that their computer equipment is year-2000-compliant. We also look to the United Nations to play a leading role in increasing member country awareness and in helping them find ways to solve this issue.

My delegation looks forward to the United Nations conference on the Y2K problem to be held on 11 December, organized by the Working Group on Informatics for national coordinators. This meeting will serve as an important occasion to advance substantive discussions and exchanges on how to coordinate international action to avert this serious problem.

Given the gravity and the urgency of the matter, my delegation strongly supports draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1 on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. We believe it is important to act now so that our transition into the next millennium will be a smooth one on all levels. My delegation would like to thank Ambassador Ahmad Kamal for his work and diligence in preparing this draft resolution and for his efforts in bringing this crucial issue to the attention of the international community.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): As a United Nations Member State and an active member of the international information community, the Ukraine is deeply concerned with the approach of the Y2K threat and is undertaking measures to avoid the possible consequences of this extraordinary situation, not only for itself but also for its communications with the rest of the world.

The steps towards resolving the "millennium bug" problem are taken in my country in accordance with the national programme of informatization that has a status of State law and determines the directions, acting forces and stages of development of national information technologies.

At this stage our experts work on the results of examination of computers, software, information systems and networks that are used by Government structures. Priority is given to power energy, including its nuclear sector, and also finances, the social sphere, transportation and communications.

The task of reducing the consequences of Y2K problem in the Ukraine is a very difficult one, although our country has enough highly qualified personnel to resolve the technical aspects of the problem. But the lack of financial resources keeps Ukraine from resolving the approaching computer disaster by the year 2000, which may cause unpredictable consequences. Compared to the Western countries, where the damage from the failure of computers could reach trillions of dollars, the problem here will be on a much different scale. The real danger is that it may affect the Chernobyl and other operating nuclear power stations. Inside every computer chip is a little clock. If the clock stops running, the chip stops running. It is like a little bomb. If the chip happened to be in a nuclear power plant, the worst that could happen, specialists hope, is that a large portion of the territory of Ukraine would be blacked out in the middle of winter, as the reactors and other power stations are temporarily shut down. But then again, anything is possible, as happened one April night in 1986 when one of the Chernobyl reactors failed to stop.

Even if the Chernobyl nuclear power station is shut down, dozens of other nuclear reactors across the territory of the former Soviet Union, which work with 40 per cent of computer systems worldwide, will be affected if they fail to recognize the turn of their internal clocks from the year 1999 to the year 2000. This makes them vulnerable to malfunctions from the "millennium bomb".

That is why Ukraine appreciates very much the efforts of United Nations Member States in combining their potential to resolve the Y2K problem, and why we support draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1. We also acknowledge as very instrumental, and I would say crucial, the role of Ambassador Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan in this process. We hope that the forthcoming meeting of national year 2000 coordinators will draw the attention of the world community and international financial organizations to the acute needs of developing countries and economies in transition in the context of the Y2K threat.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The preparedness of the United Nations system for solving the problem of the year 2000 in computer and other technical systems which are serving the Secretariat of the Organization and Member States is of the utmost importance for the effective functioning of the Organization. We believe that resolution 52/233, adopted at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, has come in a timely manner to focus attention on this problem.

The report prepared by the Secretary-General, document A/53/574, on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, gives us a clear picture of the state of affairs in this area. The Information Technology Services Division within the Office of Central Support Services of the Secretariat has already done a great deal of work to adapt the telephone system, local and wide area networks and mainframe systems to the year 2000 problem. It is reported that 5,200 computers at Headquarters have been replaced with state-of-the-art hardware and software, preparing them for the transition to the year 2000. Important work is also being done in the regional economic commissions, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Bank, among others.

However, the report gives only general information on the steps which are under way or are planned with regard to the year 2000. There is virtually no information on the specific technical results or on current and estimated costs of carrying out such measures throughout the United Nations system. In our view, such information would be of great practical significance in order to evaluate the scope and the technical and economic effectiveness of the work under way. Also helpful would be data on the chosen suppliers and providers of computer services for the Secretariat.

Experts in the area of computer technology have evaluated the world costs for eliminating the year 2000 problem at somewhere from $300 to $600 billion. These appraisals are only approximate in nature, but they can give a picture of the complexity, global nature and expense of such a problem. In this connection, it would be very important to have an estimate of the cost within the United Nations itself, since this is directly linked to possible consequences for the United Nations regular budget.

The Russian delegation agrees with the conclusions of the report to the effect that the failure of one of the United Nations computerized systems to achieve year 2000 compliance might have a domino effect and impact the operations of others which have been adapted to the year 2000 problem.

This problem is not limited only to the technical level and computer systems; it is also a problem of coordination and management. In this connection, I would like to emphasize the importance of the activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Information Technology Coordination Committee. We also believe that we should enhance the role of the Economic and Social Council's Open-ended Working Group on Informatics in order to deal with problems that might arise in the future within the United Nations system in the formation of an information society for the twenty-first century. We welcome the initiative of the Group and of Ambassador Kamal personally to hold on 11 December of this year an expanded meeting on the year 2000 problem, with the participation of national coordinators.

In Russia, the problem of the year 2000 has attracted great attention. In May of this year the Government adopted the relevant instructions, and there are to be hearings in the Russian Parliament on this problem. Throughout the country, we have begun an inventory of the computer systems in various spheres of the economy in the context of the year 2000 problem.

Currently we have established a plan for steps which will define the stages and time-frame for the establishment of an infrastructure for solving this problem. This includes preparing for the implementation of an independent certification which would define the year 2000 compliance of information systems in Russia.

Given the scope and overlapping nature of the year 2000 computer problem, which affects the interests of every Member State, the Russian delegation is counting on the further enhancement of cooperation and mutual assistance, including through the United Nations, in solving this truly global task. In this connection, the Russian delegation supports draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1, submitted by Pakistan, on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/86).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 160?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/707)

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/708)

(c) Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/709)

(d) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/710)

(e) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/711)

(f) International Civil Service Commission

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/712)

The Acting President: I first invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (a) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions", document A/53/707.

The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 12 of its report that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Ms. Nazareth A. Incera, Mr. Ahmad Kamal, Mr. Rajat Saha, Mr. Nicholas A. Thorne, Mr. Fumiaki Toya and Mr. Gian Luigi Valenza.

May I take it that the Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We come now to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (b) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions", document A/53/708.

In paragraph 6 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Pieter Johannes Bierma, Mr. Paul Ekorong A Ndong, Mr. Neil Hewitt Francis and Mr. Henry Hanson-Hall.

In paragraph 7 of the same report, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office as indicated: Mr. Sergio Chaparro Ruiz (Chile) from 1 January 1999 to 31 December 2000; Mr. Bernardo Greiver (Uruguay) from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2001; and Mr. Eduardo Iglesias (Argentina) from 1 January to 31 December 1999 and from 1 January to 31 December 2001.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint the persons recommended?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (c) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors", document A/53/709.

In paragraph 5 of that report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the Chairman of the Commission of Audit of the Philippines as a member of the Board of Auditors for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 July 1999.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to appoint this person?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I now invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (d) of agenda item 17, entitled "Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee", document A/53/710.

The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 5 of its report that the General Assembly confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of the following persons as members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Yves Oltramare, Mr. Emmanuel Noi Omaboe and Mr. Jürgen Reimnitz.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the appointment of these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We next come to the report of the Fifth Committee dealing with the appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal under sub-item (e) of agenda item 17, document A/53/711.

In paragraph 6 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Kevin Haugh and Ms. Deborah Taylor Ashford.

May I consider that the Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We now turn to the report of the Fifth Committee concerning the International Civil Service Commission under sub-item (f) of agenda item 17, document A/53/712.

In paragraph 7 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Mohsen Bel Hadj Amor, Ms. Turkia Daddah, Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl, Mr. Carlos S. Vegega and Mr. Eugeniusz Wyzner.

In the same paragraph, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the Assembly designate Mohsen Bel Hadj Amor as Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999.

In the same paragraph, the Fifth Committee further recommends that the Assembly designate Carlos S. Vegega as Vice-Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999.

May I take it that the General Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 17.

Mr. Jemat (Brunei Darussalam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 20 ***(continued)***

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Draft resolution A/53/L.62

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Draft resolution A/53/L.59

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolutions A/53/L.31, A/53/L.33/Rev.2, A/53/L.44, A/53/L.63

(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people:
(i) draft resolutions A/53/54/Rev.1, A/53/L.56
(ii) draft decision A/53/L.65

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its debate on agenda item 20 and sub-items (a), (b) and (d) at the 59th plenary meeting, on 16 November 1998.

I call on the representative of Austria to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.62.

Mr. Manz (Austria): It is my honour to introduce, on behalf of the European Union and numerous sponsors, the draft resolution on "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel", contained in document A/53/L.62. It is my understanding that Guatemala, Niger and Panama wish to join the list of sponsors.

The European Union shares the Secretary-General's concern regarding the continuous erosion of respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, in particular the Geneva Conventions and the principles set out in resolution 46/182. We condemn deliberate attacks on civilian populations and the denial of the basic right to receive humanitarian assistance, and we reiterate that humanitarian assistance has to be granted safe, unhindered and non-discriminatory access and that the civilian population, as well as humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel, have to be adequately protected.

United Nations humanitarian agencies report that more and more of their staff are working in areas designated insecure. The number of people in need who may have died because it was impossible to provide aid on account of the security situation is inestimable. We strongly condemn any act or failure to act that obstructs or prevents humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel from discharging their functions or entail their being subject to threats, the use of force and even injury and death.

The report of the Secretary-General has once again drawn attention to the safety and security risks faced by humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel. The situation on the ground has not improved over the last year, and therefore the European Union is again taking the initiative to submit a draft resolution that condemns attacks against humanitarian personnel or United Nations personnel and, *inter alia,* urges all States to take the necessary measures to ensure the full and effective implementation of the relevant principles and rules of international humanitarian law. The European Union wants to stress in this context that the list of war crimes contained in the Statute of the International Criminal Court also includes attacks intentionally directed against humanitarian or peacekeeping personnel.

The draft resolution before us requests the Secretary-General to present a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the safety and security situation of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel and measures to be taken to improve it. We are looking forward to a report which discusses the roots of humanitarian insecurity and provides a review of existing security arrangements, including the needs of non-governmental organizations. We encourage the Secretary-General to go further in addressing these issues, and we assure him once again of our full support in that effort.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.59.

Mr. Norström (Sweden): I have the honour to introduce on behalf of the sponsors the draft resolution on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations contained in document A/53/L.59.

The first draft was discussed in informal consultations on 24 November. In those consultations other delegations and for the good spirit of cooperation and partnership in the consultations.

In the draft resolution, the General Assembly recalls its previous resolutions on the topic, takes note of the report of the Secretary-General and welcomes the progress made by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in strengthening the coordination. The Assembly welcomes the first humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council held this summer and the agreed conclusions from that session and then calls upon relevant actors to cooperate to ensure the implementation and follow-up to the agreed conclusions.

Finally, the General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, through the 1999 session of the Economic and Social Council, on the strengthening of the coordination, including the implementation of and follow-up to the agreed conclusions and invites the Economic and Social Council to consider ways to further enhance the humanitarian segment of its future sessions, as outlined in the agreed conclusions.

My delegation and the sponsors trust that the draft resolution can be adopted by consensus. May I add that the following delegations wish to join in sponsoring the draft resolution: Bangladesh, Greece and Guatemala.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Senegal, on behalf of the African States, to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.63.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Group of African States, I should like to submit for consideration by the General Assembly, under sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, draft resolution A/53/L.63, on special assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The draft resolution, procedural in nature, was negotiated with representatives of donor countries and other interested parties with the support of the African Group. It is a follow-up to resolution 52/169 A, with the same title, adopted last year. It also takes into account current developments and the consequences of the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the report of the Secretary-General emphasizes the financial and material assistance provided by the United Nations in 1997, we should also acknowledge that since the meeting in December 1997 of the group of "Friends of the Congo", the situation in the country has developed considerably — a new situation that has had negative repercussions on the country's social and economic conditions.

In spite of the establishment of a trust fund to support economic recovery programmes for the Congo in the context of its three-year plan, the commitments made by development partners have not yet fully met the expectations of the Congo authorities. A new meeting of the "Friends of the Congo" will certainly be necessary. The armed conflict now sundering the Democratic Republic of the Congo has further exacerbated that country's economic problems — and for a long time to come.

The draft resolution before the Assembly calls for a lasting solution to the conflict, so that, in a calm and peaceful climate, the people of the Congo can resume the process of rebuilding and returning to the normalcy they crave, both in terms of the economy and in terms of democracy.

The draft resolution acknowledges the value of the coordination of humanitarian assistance that continues to be provided to those affected by the armed conflict, and urges friendly countries and non-governmental organizations to increase their assistance with a view to achieving the rapid recovery of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This draft resolution was the result of negotiations and a consensus with donor countries, and I urge the Assembly to adopt it by consensus. The following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.63: China, the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, Djibouti and India.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2.

Mr. Benhima (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti", under agenda item 20 (b), "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions". I wish to announce that Bangladesh and Greece have become sponsors of the draft resolution.

This draft resolution, sponsored by more than 20 countries from many continents, recalls the difficult natural conditions from which Djibouti suffers, which have a considerable impact on its development. These include droughts and torrential rains and floods such as those that ravaged the country's infrastructure in 1989 and 1994 and more recently in October and November 1997. Let us recall that this small country is faithful to a long tradition of generosity and hospitality, and the draft resolution notes that it is host to tens of thousands of refugees and persons displaced from their countries, the large majority of them from Somalia. The burden of these refugees puts a particular strain on Djibouti's already precarious social infrastructure.

In the face of a subregional environment that is most unfavourable, especially because of its instability, Djibouti has courageously and unswervingly embarked upon the path of political reform and has undertaken a major effort at economic recovery by signing agreements with international financial institutions. But these efforts cannot succeed without massive and generous support from the international community. It is in that spirit that the draft resolution appeals to the international community to support these efforts by contributing to the process of demobilization and the reintegration of demobilized soldiers, and to the rebuilding of social infrastructure.

Finally, the draft resolution — which it is my hope will be adopted by consensus, like similar texts in previous years — expresses gratitude to the countries and intergovernmental organizations that have demonstrated their solidarity in a concrete way, through their contributions, to the Government and the people of Djibouti. It also expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continued efforts to make the international community aware of the difficulties faced by that fraternal country.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Tajikistan to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.44.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The delegation of Tajikistan has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.44, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan". For the third time, the General Assembly will be adopting a text of this kind, which reflects the international community's support for the peace process and for the normalization of the situation in the Republic of Tajikistan.

Tajikistan is going through a difficult stage in its post-conflict development. Humanitarian efforts are needed to supplement the activities of the Government in rebuilding the country's economic life. As the Secretary-General has said, the continuation of humanitarian programmes is an investment in the cause of peace and a way of ensuring that the situation in Tajikistan does not become a chronic emergency.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his intention to issue a consolidated inter-agency appeal for humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for 1999.

Specifically, the draft resolution before the Assembly welcomes the efforts aimed at achieving peace and national reconciliation in Tajikistan. It welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General in drawing the attention of the international community to the acute humanitarian problems of Tajikistan, and expresses its appreciation to all States and organizations that have responded positively to the humanitarian needs of Tajikistan. The text recognizes that comprehensive international support remains essential for the intensification of the peace process in Tajikistan and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the progress made in the implementation of the present draft resolution.

We express our deep gratitude to all countries that have joined in sponsoring this draft resolution and to all delegations that helped to reach agreement on it. We are grateful especially for the coordinating role played by the representative of Denmark, Ambassador Jørgen Bøjer.

I wish to announce that Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Moldova and Pakistan have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.44.

It is my hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft decision A/53/L.65.

Mr. Zaki (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation asked for the floor on behalf of the States sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.56. After numerous consultations and contacts during the last two weeks, it was possible to reach a formula that enjoyed the approval of the parties that participated in those consultations. I therefore request that draft resolution A/53/L.56 not be put to the vote.

I would like to introduce the draft decision contained in document A/53/L.65 on behalf of the following States: Jordan, Tunisia, Oman, Kuwait, Mauritania, Yemen, Djibouti and Palestine. The draft decision was agreed after a series of long negotiations that produced the text contained in the document.

In this respect, I wish to thank the delegations of member States of the European Union for co-sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.54 and for their constructive participation in the negotiations on the draft decision. I appeal to all delegations present to vote in favour of the draft resolution and the draft decision.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Austria to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", as contained in document A/53/L.54/Rev.1.

The sponsors of this draft resolution continue to attach particular importance to assistance to the Palestinian people. By the terms of this draft resolution, the General Assembly expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Member States, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their efforts and continuous assistance to the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, the General Assembly calls upon relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their assistance in order to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people in accordance with the priorities set forth by the Palestinian Authority, with emphasis on institutional capacity-building. It also calls upon the international donor community to expedite delivery of pledged assistance to the Palestinian people to meet their urgent needs.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution welcomes the results of the Ministerial Conference to Support Middle East Peace and Development which took place in Washington, D.C., on 30 November 1998. On the occasion of that Conference, the European Union underlined its continued commitment to the peace process through a renewal of its financial assistance to the Palestinian people. The European Union will also play a central role in the technical follow-up to the Conference.

As the major donor of assistance to the Palestinian people, the European Union is pleased to again initiate this draft resolution. We hope that the General Assembly will be able to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1 without a vote, as it has done in previous years.

The Acting President: I should now like to consult the Assembly with a view to considering draft resolution A/53/L.63 and draft decision A/53/L.65, as requested by its sponsors. In this connection, since these documents have only been circulated this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to consider draft resolution A/53/L.63.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to consider draft decision A/53/L.65.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/53/L.33/Rev.2, L.44, L.54/Rev.1, L.59, L.62 and L.63 and draft decision A/53/L.65.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): This year, as in years past, Israel will join the consensus on the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.54/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", and I would like to explain our position in this regard.

For many years, Israel has been cooperating fully with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as with other international organizations, in implementing programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. In this respect, Israel believes that the United Nations Special

Coordinator in these areas can play a significant role in promoting the social and economic goals set out by those organizations.

We also welcome the concerted efforts of Member States, international financial institutions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to aid in the development efforts. Israel believes that the promotion of the economic well-being of the Palestinians is an essential element in the promotion of peace and stability, and that this effort can be advanced only through cooperation.

In this regard, we feel that it is necessary to mention that, in our opinion, assistance to the Palestinians should be as tangible as possible, and on the ground. The holding of conferences and seminars cannot and should not replace direct economic and development assistance. If the economic situation is as serious as the draft resolution asserts, then surely the funds available should be applied towards directly alleviating that situation, and not for the purpose of holding yet another seminar.

Israel's participation in the consensus on the draft resolution should not be construed as implying any position regarding the present status of the areas referred to as "occupied territory".

Additionally, our support does not carry any implication regarding Israel's position on the permanent status of those territories, which, in accordance with the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September 1993 and the implementation agreements achieved in its wake, is a matter to be negotiated between Israel and the Palestinians in the framework of the permanent status negotiations, which have just recently reconvened.

As far as the draft decision contained in document A/53/L.65, Israel will vote against it, for the following reasons.

First of all, this draft decision is yet another attempt to intervene in the bilateral negotiations between the parties through a decision of the General Assembly. We would like to reiterate the position of Israel that, as stipulated in the terms of reference of the peace process and the agreements achieved to date, all outstanding issues are to be resolved through direct negotiations between the parties themselves. In his letter dated 9 September 1993, addressed to Prime Minister Rabin, Chairman Arafat committed himself to abide by this principle.

Secondly, Israel regrets that contentious political elements have been introduced into the issue of assistance to the Palestinian people. Of all parties, the Palestinians themselves should be most sensitive to the value of maintaining broad support for this issue. That broad support was most recently manifested at last week's conference of donor parties, held in Washington, D.C., in which Israel willingly participated. As detailed in our statement to the General Assembly during the 16 November debate on this issue, Israel is greatly interested in promoting the economic well-being of the Palestinians in the territories. Therefore, it is regrettable that the Palestinian observer delegation found it fit to introduce extraneous and controversial political terminology into this subject.

Thirdly, the draft decision has been presented despite, and indeed because of, the legal opinion of the Secretariat, which objected to the application of the terminology as demanded by the Palestinian observer delegation. It should be recognized by the Assembly that this draft decision represents an attempt to overpower the legal position of the Secretariat itself. This is yet another example of the abuse of the United Nations system in the service of a narrow political cause.

Finally, the language of the draft decision is riddled with contradictions. Just one example is the term "occupied". The head of the Palestinian Observer delegation stated here on 30 November that only a few thousand Palestinians live under occupation in the city of Hebron, in the area of the city defined in the accords as H2. Therefore, the rest of Hebron, and all the other areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, which cover about 98 per cent of the Palestinian population in the territories, are, according to this view, no longer to be considered "occupied", and consequently do not fall under this draft decision's definition. It would not therefore be "appropriate" — as the draft decision stipulates — that reports relating to these areas use the suggested terminology. We have more comments regarding this draft, and we reserve our right to submit them in due course.

For all these reasons, Israel will vote against the draft decision contained in document A/53/L.65.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the six draft resolutions and one draft decision submitted under agenda item 20 and its sub-items (a), (b) and (d).

The Assembly, under agenda item 20, will first take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.62, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.62?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/87).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 20, take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.59, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.59?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/88).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/1 J).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.44, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.44?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/1 K).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.63, entitled "Special assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.63?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/1 L).

The Acting President: Next, under sub-item (d) of agenda item 20, the General Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/89).

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now, under sub-item (d) of item 20, take a decision on draft decision A/53/L.65, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Draft decision A/53/L.65 was adopted by 131 votes to 4.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Jordan and the United Arab Emirates informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Before calling the first speaker in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation would like to explain its vote on draft resolution A/53/L.62, "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

The Russian delegation supports the humanitarian thrust of this resolution, which is a logical continuation of efforts to protect the lives, honour and dignity of the people who are implementing the principles and will of the United Nations in various regions of the globe. Russia took an active part in the adoption in 1994 of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and reaffirms its readiness to continue working to ensure the safety of those individuals not yet protected by international law. Therefore, the Russian delegation supported the adoption of this resolution. However, we could not co-sponsor it, since the work on the draft did not take into consideration a number of the concerns expressed by our delegation.

In our view, unifying within the framework of a single draft resolution various categories of humanitarian personnel, United Nations personnel and associated personnel requires drawing a clear distinction based on the already existing legal regimes for protecting these people. In particular, we need to distinguish between those who are participating as combatants in United Nations operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter — personnel whose protection is regulated by laws relating to international armed conflicts — and staff who are not taking a direct part in hostilities and who enjoy relevant immunities and privileges, as well as other personnel who are taking part in humanitarian activities to whom such protection does not extend.

While supporting the general thrust towards a framework that unifies the various aspects of this topic, we hope that the concerns expressed by the Russian delegation will be taken into account by the sponsors in further work.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation joined the consensus concerning the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, contained in document A/53/L.54/Rev. 1, which has just been adopted. We did this on the basis of our ongoing support for the efforts to help the Palestinian people deal with the repressive Israeli policies.

My delegation supports the operative paragraphs aimed at providing assistance to the Palestinian people in order to overcome the great challenges they face, support them in meeting their needs and enhance their social and economic development. However, we have reservations concerning some of the preambular paragraphs of the resolution because they do not reflect how the crisis faced by the Middle East peace process has developed, or the situation in general.

The Syrian Arab Republic believes that travelling the true path towards achieving the social and economic development of the Palestinian people and alleviating their suffering requires eliminating the real causes of this suffering, which lie in the Israeli occupation. Travelling the correct path requires implementing the United Nations resolutions aimed at putting an end to the occupation of the Arab territories that Israel has occupied since 1967 and not allowing Israel to continue its policies of enclosure and seizure. Seizure of Palestinian lands, exploitation of the natural resources of the occupied Arab territories, expansion of settlement activities, the policies of putting obstacles in front of the Middle East peace process — all these are at the heart of the problem confronting the peace process at the present time. And they are all relevant to real development in the Palestinian occupied territory.

As for the allegations that we heard just now from the Israeli delegate — that Israel supports international efforts to help the Palestinian people, though it does not recognize that the lands mentioned in the draft resolution are occupied territory — this is highly ironic and shows no respect for the will of the international community, which has been expressed in many relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly those of the Security Council. The Israeli statement also aims at evading the implementation of the United Nations resolutions and the solution to this problem first outlined in Madrid in 1991. For Israel to allege that it is possible to achieve peace and development under conditions of siege, occupation and collective punishment is just a futile attempt to justify occupation and oppression in the Palestinian territory.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (a) and (d) of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Tomorrow morning, Tuesday, 8 December 1998, the General Assembly, as its first item, will continue consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, "Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions", and will take action on draft resolutions A/53/L.31 and A/53/L.64.

Agenda item 24 (*continued*)

Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, including measures and recommendations agreed upon at its mid-term review

Draft resolution (A/53/L.39/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its debate on agenda item 24 at its 47th plenary meeting, on 28 October 1998. In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/53/L.39/Rev.1.

I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The adoption by the General Assembly on 18 December 1991 of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) represented, for our continent and for the entire international community, a new hope for the African peoples.

In 1996 the Assembly conducted a mid-term review of UN-NADAF. That same year the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa was launched, in a context characterized by the globalization of issues and the emergence of new challenges resulting from that globalization. This means that African issues have continued to occupy an important place in our Organization's deliberations. It should be noted that Africa has achieved appreciable economic performance in spite of constraints of all types, which it continues to face.

In draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, submitted for the Assembly's consideration and which it is my privilege to introduce in my capacity as Chairman of the African Group, the Assembly takes note with appreciation of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, as well as the Tokyo Agenda for Action adopted by the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) in October 1998.

The draft resolution emphasizes the need to focus attention on the priority areas identified by African countries themselves in the Cairo Agenda for Action. It reiterates the importance of evaluating the follow-up machinery for the implementation of UN-NADAF at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. It requests the Secretary-General to propose a set of performance indicators, *inter alia*, with a view to assessing and measuring the progress made in this framework.

Draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1 notes the urgent need for all States, international and multilateral organizations, financial institutions and development funds and programmes of the United Nations system to take concrete measures to ensure full and coordinated implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Lastly, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to ensure the implementation of UN-NADAF through the coordination of initiatives for Africa and to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session a report on the follow-up to resolution 51/32 of 6 December 1996 on the mid-term review of UN-NADAF, pending its final review and appraisal, which is scheduled for the year 2002.

Japan and the Group of 77 and China have become sponsors of this draft resolution, and we wish to thank the Group of 77 and China, which was involved in the negotiations of this draft resolution from the very beginning.

If you will allow me, Sir, I will now make certain corrections to the text in English, because we worked on the basis of the English version.

In the first line of the fifth preambular paragraph, after "Noting with concern that", read "while" instead of "despite"; delete "the" before "challenges" and "opportunities"; and insert "are" between the words "opportunities" and "created". Thus, the corrected version should read:

(spoke in English)

> "Noting with concern that, while both challenges and opportunities are created ...."

(spoke in French)

In the last line of the seventh preambular paragraph, after the words "as well as", change "highlights" to "highlighting". Therefore, the corrected last line of the seventh preambular paragraph should read:

(spoke in English)

> "as well as highlighting the concepts of ownership and global partnership,".

(spoke in French)

Those errors were made by the Secretariat.

The next change is in operative paragraph 2, where "which, among other things, has impeded" is replaced by "which has been an impediment, among other things, to the". Thus the corrected version should read as follows:

(spoke in English)

> "Expresses concern at the overall declining trend of resource flows to Africa, in particular in the level of official development assistance, which has been an impediment, among other things, to the timely implementation of the New Agenda";

(spoke in French)

There is also a correction in the second line of operative paragraph 5. Replace the third "and" with ",as well as". The corrected version should read:

(spoke in English)

> "... and development funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations ...".

(spoke in French)

In the fourth line of operative paragraph 6, replace the words "to ascertain whether" with "to ensure that". Therefore, the corrected version should read:

(spoke in English)

> "... and, in this context, to ensure that the United Nations and its funds and programmes ...."

Finally, in the last line of the last operative paragraph — paragraph 7 — replace the word "Assembly" with the word "its". That line should now read:

> "a progress report on the implementation of its resolution 51/32".

Mr. Donokusumo (Indonesia): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 24, "Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, including measures and recommendations agreed upon at its mid-term review".

In this context, while the draft resolution before the Assembly in document A/53/L.39/Rev.1 was negotiated by the African Group, the text should be viewed as a commonly agreed position of the Group of 77 and China and as a Group of 77 initiative from its start. I should like to underline in this connection the important need for the implementation of initiatives for development to be country-driven. Therefore, priority focus should be given to those areas determined by the host countries. It is well known that the Group of 77 and China have consistently maintained this position.

Before concluding my brief remarks, I should like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Group to our African colleagues, who have been instrumental in bringing this draft before the Assembly and also to the other Groups and countries that have joined in sponsoring this draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, as orally corrected.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 53/90).

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind her that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): While we support many of the measures underlined in this resolution, we would have preferred more balance in the resolution on implementing the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF).

The United States believes that assistance from the international community, through bilateral and multilateral initiatives alike, will play a significant role in bettering the lives of Africans throughout the continent. We strongly believe, however, that Africans themselves will be required to take the lead if the initiative is to achieve tangible results. Our response, both in our own bilateral and in multilateral development efforts, is to work more often with the stakeholders and increase African ownership of the development process.

The Secretary-General's progress report highlighted the fact that more needs to be accomplished on the promotion of private sector and foreign direct investment, the democratization and strengthening of civil society, and debt relief. This can be accomplished only through national ownership and global partnership, which have been emphasized by the Secretary-General and which we believe are the keys to UN-NADAF.

International support for capacity-building is a component which the United Nations can provide. Accordingly, we will continue to encourage increased coordination among national officials, Africa's own development experts, specialists in the development community and the United Nations at the field level in order to develop pragmatic, reality-based initiatives.

This coordination must take place, however, in tandem with resolve on the part of African leaders to take necessary measures to promote such elements of a successful strategy as good governance, accountability, transparency, restraint, the rule of law and an active civil society.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 24?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 35 *(continued)*

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity

Draft resolution (A/53/L.21/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on this item at its 49th plenary meeting on 29 October 1998.

I now give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the States members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", under agenda item 35. For reasons beyond our control, the draft resolution was not available when the item was under consideration on 29 October.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution, *inter alia*, recalls the Secretary-General's report, in document A/53/419, on cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU, as well as the agreement of 15 November 1965 as updated and signed on 9 October 1990 by the Secretaries-General of the two organizations. These two documents define the modalities for cooperation between the two organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Still in the preambular part, the draft resolution stresses the importance of three significant events that took place this year and that will further strengthen this cooperation: the thirty-fourth summit of the OAU, the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Africa and, of course, the issuance of the important report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

With respect to current events, the draft resolution expresses deep concern that, despite policies of reform and the efforts of African leaders to promote economic integration, the economic situation of African countries remains critical. It calls the international community's attention to the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa.

The draft resolution also recognizes the importance of developing and maintaining a culture of peace and tolerance in international relations, given that the ideals of the United Nations and the OAU are founded on peace and hence on the prevention of conflicts and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In the operative part, draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1 notes with satisfaction the status of cooperation between the two organizations, in particular, the Secretary-General's decision to establish a liaison office with the OAU in Addis Ababa. An appeal is made to United Nations organs, and more specifically the Security Council, to continue to involve the OAU closely in their activities, especially those pertaining to Africa.

In the area of international security, the draft resolution invites the United Nations, on one hand, to continue to help the OAU to strengthen the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and, on the other hand, to encourage donor countries to enhance African peacekeeping capabilities.

As regards economic matters, the draft resolution before the Assembly calls for support of the functioning and the activities of the African Economic Community and invites United Nations agencies to intensify the coordination of their activities as well as their harmonization with programmes of subregional and regional organizations.

Finally, an appeal is made for better African representation within the United Nations system, more specifically at high-level decision-making posts.

The draft resolution, on which the General Assembly will soon take a decision, is the outcome of negotiations and joint efforts with other countries and groups of countries. It is in keeping with those resolutions we have always adopted on this agenda item, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus once again.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 53/91).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 35?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 164 (*continued*)

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Draft resolution (A/53/L.40/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its debate on this item at its 36th plenary meeting on 12 October 1998.

In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/53/L.40/Rev.1. I now call on the representative of Senegal to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): First I wish to emphasize the special importance the African Group attaches to the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. For that reason, our Group has taken the initiative of submitting draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1 for approval by the General Assembly.

The initial draft resolution was the subject of serious and fruitful negotiations with our development partners. Therefore, I would like to thank them all and express, on behalf of the African Group as a whole, our deepest gratitude for the positive amendments they proposed to us. I would especially like to thank Canada, the United States of America, Japan and the European Union for their contribution to improving the draft resolution.

In the preambular part, this draft resolution recognizes the significant progress made by the African countries in creating an environment favourable to growth and sustainable development. The preambular part emphasizes the dialectics of peace, security and sustainable development and notes the negative affects of conflicts on civilian populations, especially women and children. It also expresses the grave concern of the United Nations regarding the use of children in armed conflicts and recognizes the need for all parties to adhere to principles of international humanitarian law and relevant human rights instruments. By this draft resolution, the General Assembly also expresses its concern at the negative impact of AIDS, poverty and all forms of discrimination against women and young girls on African development.

In its operative part, the draft resolution welcomes the Secretary-General's report for the holistic and global approach to African problems and for the concrete recommendations he has made as well as his vigorous plea made for Africa. In noting the need for the strong political will of the African States and the international community as a whole with a view to implementing those recommendations, the draft resolution invites the international community to provide Africa with the necessary concessional resources in order to strengthen African capacity and for economic growth and development.

Within that context, the draft resolution strongly underlines the importance of creating an environment favourable to foreign direct investment, especially access of African products to world markets, to good governance, to increase in the volume and effectiveness of official development assistance, to settlement of the unsustainable debt burden, including debt conversion measures and through flexible initiatives regarding the situation of poor, heavily indebted countries. The draft resolution encourages and supports regional cooperation and integration and welcomes the entry into force in May 1994 of the Abuja Treaty, which established the African Economic Community.

Emphasis has also been placed on the need to improve the coordination of organs and institutions of the United Nations system in post-conflict peace-building, as well as on the importance of paying special attention to the specific needs of protecting refugees and displaced persons, especially the most vulnerable, in particular children and women.

Last but not least, the question of follow-up to the implementation of this resolution, as well as to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, has been dealt with. Thus, in addition to the initiatives taken or envisaged by the Economic and Social Council and other bodies and institutions of the United Nations system, we have proposed the establishment, by the President of the General Assembly, of an ad hoc open-ended working group. This working group would be instructed to implement the present draft resolution and, in particular, the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report which fall within the purview of the General Assembly. It would determine its mandate, as well as its working methods, taking into account the outcome of the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council planned for July 1999.

In conclusion, I would like again to express our sincere gratitude to Canada, the European Union, India, Japan and the United States, and to thank, on behalf of the African Group, all those who have improved upon the initial draft with their positive contributions. We would like especially to mention the efforts and support given by the Group of 77 and China in the negotiations on both draft resolution A/53/L.40 and on the draft resolution just adopted, A/53/L.39.

The sponsors of A/53/L.40 are the Group of 77 and China, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States. I would like to thank them all, on behalf of the African Group, for their support for this draft resolution.

If I may, I would like, as I did a few minutes ago with A/53/L.39, to make a few changes to the text of A/53/L.40/Rev.1 because of some typographical errors which have crept in to the English version. Since we worked on the basis of English, I shall make these changes in English.

(spoke in English)

At the end of the eighth preambular paragraph, after "relief workers", add "and the use of children as combatants".

In the tenth preambular paragraph, add "problems and", to read "socio-economic problems and challenge".

In operative paragraph 2, with reference to the Secretary-General, insert the word "further", to read "his efforts to further mobilize", rather than simply "his efforts to mobilize".

In operative paragraph 8 we change "rather than" to "instead of", to read "rely upon peaceful means instead of military solutions".

In operative paragraph 9 the word "concessional" is inserted before "resources", to read "providing African countries with sufficient concessional resources".

And finally, in the fourth line of operative paragraph 10, replace "by means of" with "through". The phrase thus reads "including through debt conversion measures".

(spoke in French)

These are the changes which have been made to the draft resolution. Once again, I would like to thank the Assembly for its support for this resolution.

Mr. Donokusumo (Indonesia): Once again I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 164, "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa".

Allow me, first, to thank Member States for their valuable support in adopting draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, which will contribute to the development of Africa and the achievement of sustainable development on that continent.

The draft resolution now before the Assembly, draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, is of equal importance to the Group of 77 and China. It should be considered as representing the Group's position on this issue, and as a resolution of the Group of 77 and China. I would note that this important draft resolution has been negotiated by the African Group as an important step in achieving peace and development which are among the core issues of concern to the Group.

To conclude, I should like to take this opportunity to express the Group's appreciation to our African colleagues, who have been instrumental in bringing this draft resolution before us, and also to the other groups and countries who have joined us in sponsoring it.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): When President Clinton travelled to six African nations this past April, he heard at first hand about the efforts and accomplishments of the African people in writing a new chapter in the history of their continent. He met with economic leaders and business people who made clear in no uncertain terms that Africa is open for business. He saw the natural and physical wonders of Africa and heard at first hand how these essential resources are being preserved for future generations. He met with survivors of Rwanda's genocide as they undertook the tasks of rebuilding and reconciliation, and he talked directly with African people as they shared their dreams and aspirations for the future and for the future of their children.

Our delegation believes that the resolution on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa will provide a step forward in assisting Africans in realizing their dreams and aspirations for their future. That is why our delegation is pleased to be a sponsor of this resolution. We believe it correctly identifies actions to be taken at national, subregional, regional and international levels to move towards the goals of creating a new and lasting partnership between Africa and the international community. This partnership has as its goal resolving conflict, promoting democracy and respect for human rights, accelerating the building of political stability and integrating the African continent into the global economy.

The resolution makes clear that building a durable peace and promoting sustainable development in Africa will require increased and sustained political will by African States and the international community. The resolution also expresses support for the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report, which we believe identifies key areas where more work is required. We note that the resolution correctly identifies a close linkage among sustainable development, peace and security.

Our delegation believes that one of the most important factors which will allow for sustainable development in all African countries and the participation of all African countries in the global economy is an enabling environment for investment. This environment can be created only through good governance, the establishment of the rule of law and the promotion of transparency and accountability in public administration, respect for human rights and the strengthening of democratic institutions. Only as an adjunct to the efforts of African nations themselves can international technical and financial assistance be used effectively to implement the Secretary-General's recommendations.

As economic opportunity spreads, so too will the prospects for a sustained and lasting peace. In order to promote durable peace, the draft resolution rightly points out that preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures need to be undertaken.

The United States firmly supports strengthening Africa's capacity to participate in all aspects of peacekeeping operations, in particular through increased cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity and also between the United Nations and subregional organizations. These organizations have a critical role to play in resolving and preserving stability in Africa. Accordingly, we have made financial contributions to these organs and have created the African crisis response initiative to assist African soldiers in enhancing the continent's peacekeeping capability.

President Clinton remains committed to working with Congress to restore United States assistance to Africa to historical levels, and we remain hopeful that the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) will help us meet the goal of ensuring that at least 50 per cent of our assistance is spent in Africa.

We reiterate our call for creditors to follow the example of the World Bank and the Paris Club in providing interim debt relief to support reforms to date. Our delegation looks forward to working with our African partners and the international community through the integrated efforts of the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa, as well as the outcome of the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, with the overall aim of reducing poverty and its associated problems and restoring a sense of hope for future generations.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, as orally corrected.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation attaches great importance to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as to the adoption of the draft resolution that is before the General Assembly. We have noted the substantive and comprehensive nature of this draft, which we will, of course, support.

The Russian delegation took an active part in the work of the Security Council working group, which fine-tuned the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General. In this connection, we have consistently held that the Security Council working group should not get involved in discussing the recommendations of the Secretary-General pertaining to the competence of the General Assembly.

Pursuant to operative paragraph 15 of the draft resolution, the Working Group of the General Assembly that is to be created on the basis of the draft resolution before us will determine its mandate, taking into account the outcome of the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council on this matter. The Working Group will also define the specific approach it will take to its work on the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. Of course, this work should be carried out bearing in mind the fact that the Security Council is actively considering the recommendations of the report that fall within its purview and has already taken a series of concrete decisions in that respect.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, as orally corrected. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, as orally corrected?

> *Draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1 as orally corrected was adopted* (resolution 53/92).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 164?

> *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Draft resolutions (A/53/L.20, A/53/L.22/Rev.2)

Reports of the Fifth Committee (A/53/698, A/53/699)

The Acting President: Members will recall that at its 62nd plenary meeting, on 19 November 1998, the General Assembly concluded the debate on this item. I should now like to draw the Assembly's attention to the report of the Fifth Committee contained in document A/53/699 on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/53/L.20, and the report of the Fifth Committee contained in document A/53/698 on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/53/L.20 and A/53/L.22/Rev.2.

The General Assembly will first take up draft resolution A/53/L.20, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.20: Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Nigeria.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.20?

Draft resolution A/53/L.20 was adopted (resolution 53/93).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take up draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2: Belgium, Brazil, Nigeria, Paraguay, Pêru and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2?

Draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2 was adopted (resolution 53/94).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 44.

Agenda item 57, "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte", originally scheduled for tomorrow morning, will be taken up at a later date to be announced. Sub-item (g) of agenda item 17, "Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences", will also be taken up at a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.82

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

82nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 8 December 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Opertti .... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 52

Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the aerial and naval military attack against the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the present United States Administration in April 1986

The Acting President: It is my understanding that after the necessary consultations consideration of this item may be deferred to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of the item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 52.

Agenda item 53

Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security

The Acting President: It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 53.

Agenda item 54

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The Acting President: It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 54.

Agenda item 55

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

The Acting President: It is my understanding that there has been no request to consider this item at the present session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 55.

Agenda item 56

Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the Assembly's wish to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-fourth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 56.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolutions (A/53/L.31, A/53/L.64)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Senegal to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.64.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): I should like on behalf of the African Group to submit to the General Assembly for its consideration draft resolution A/53/L.64, entitled "Special assistance to Central and East African countries receiving refugees, returnees and displaced persons", under agenda item 20 (b). Broadly speaking, this procedural text echoes language adopted in resolution 52/169 B on the same item.

A positive feature of this year's draft resolution is that the special assistance relates not only to Central African but also to East African countries receiving refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The draft resolution notes that those countries, which are receiving a great number of refugees and displaced persons, are also among the least developed countries and therefore continue to experience an extremely critical economic situation.

Despite all the efforts deployed by agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and the Organization of African Unity, the situation of these refugees remains precarious and it is urgent that the security situation in the region be improved.

While thanking the Central and East African countries which have made enormous sacrifices by receiving these refugees, the African Group considers that humanitarian assistance for these refugees and displaced persons should be substantially increased in the light of the magnitude of their needs and because of the need to create conditions conducive to a lasting improvement in their situation.

The draft resolution congratulates the Secretary-General for the efforts he has made to draw the attention of the international community to the situation of refugees in the Central and East African countries, and expresses gratitude to States, organizations, bodies and non-governmental organizations that have delivered financial, technical and material assistance to those refugees.

The draft resolution urges the Governments of the region to provide safe and unhindered access for United Nations and other humanitarian personnel to the populations in need, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The text of this draft resolution was negotiated with representatives of donor countries and other interested parties. The United States of America and India have joined my country in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.64, for which, on behalf of Africa, we thank them. We would request the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritania to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.31.

Mr. Ould Mohamed (Mauritania) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the pleasure of introducing the draft resolution entitled "Assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia" (A/53/L.31).

I would first like to inform the General Assembly that in addition to the countries listed in document A/53/L.31, the following countries have also become sponsors: China, the Comoros, Djibouti, India, Italy and Mauritania.

Allow me now to present some of the key ideas of this draft resolution.

In the first and second preambular paragraphs the Assembly would recall all the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council on emergency assistance to Somalia.

The fourth preambular paragraph notes the continued efforts of the Secretary-General to assist the Somali people to promote peace, stability and national reconciliation.

The draft resolution refers to the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/344) in its seventh preambular paragraph. It also notes that the fragility of State infrastructure impedes reconciliation in Somalia and stresses the need for rehabilitation and for the establishment of institutions in order to bring about the reconstruction of the country. The Assembly would also recall the importance of implementing resolution 47/160.

Operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution expresses the gratitude of the General Assembly to all States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have assisted Somalia.

Operative paragraphs 2 and 3 express appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Movement of Non-Aligned countries and others for their efforts to resolve the situation in Somalia.

Operative paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 indicate that it is the Somali people who are primarily responsible for the rehabilitation of the country and appeal to them to achieve national reconciliation allowing for transition from relief to reconstruction and development.

The Assembly would also call upon Somalia to respect fully the security and safety of personnel of the United Nations and to permit their complete freedom of movement throughout the country.

Lastly, operative paragraphs 9 and 11 request the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize international humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for Somalia and to present a report on this matter to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

In conclusion, on behalf of the sponsors, I wish to thank all the countries that have contributed to the preparation of this draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted by consensus, as have corresponding ones in previous years.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolutions contained in documents A/53/L.31 and A/53/L.64.

The Assembly will first take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.31, entitled "Assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.31 was adopted (resolution 53/1 M).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.64, entitled "Special assistance to Central and East African countries receiving refugees, returnees and displaced persons".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/53/L.64 was adopted (resolution 53/1 N).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20.

Agenda item 43

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/564)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.57)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/732)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Venezuela to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.57.

Mr. Arcaya (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of all the members of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti — Argentina, Canada, Chile, France, the United States and Venezuela — I have the pleasure to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.57, which is now before the Assembly. The following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Barbados, Costa Rica, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Haiti, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom.

This draft resolution pays tribute to the people of Haiti for its steadfast search for solid and lasting democracy with justice and economic prosperity. It also supports the continued work of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States to further Haiti's political progress.

The draft resolution also takes note with appreciation of the efforts made by various countries to provide humanitarian assistance and technical cooperation to the people of Haiti. At the same time, it supports fully the contributions made by the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH) and its Executive Director and personnel, as well as the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), in establishing a climate of freedom and tolerance conducive to respect for human rights and the full restoration of constitutional democracy in Haiti.

The draft also reflects the international community's concern at the political stalemate resulting from the fact that Haiti has had no Prime Minister for almost 18 months now, which undermines the development and consolidation of democratic institutions in Haiti. In this respect, it urges Haitian authorities and political leaders to continue their efforts to find a compromise that will put an end to the current crisis.

The draft resolution welcomes the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his most recent report on the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti to extend the mandate of the United Nations component of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti until 31 December 1999. It also reaffirms the commitment of the international community to continue to provide technical, economic and financial cooperation to Haiti in order to support and promote its economic and social development and to strengthen the institutions responsible for dispensing justice and guaranteeing democracy, respect for human rights, political stability and economic development.

The United Nations presence in Haiti in the form of its component in the International Civilian Mission and the Civilian Police Mission is not in itself a guarantee that the difficulties being experienced by Haitian society will be resolved in the near future. However, Venezuela is convinced that with the support of the missions and of the international community as a whole, Haiti will continue to advance towards the consolidation of democracy in a climate of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The achievements that we have seen in these areas bear this out.

To withdraw international participation from Haiti at this time would be to reverse the process of institutional consolidation which, albeit fragile, has already borne fruit. MICIVIH's presence continues to be decisive in this process. For this reason, we are confident that in adopting this draft resolution we will be supporting the continued development of Haitian institutions and, ultimately, the establishment of democracy in Haiti on a secure footing.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland and Liechtenstein — align themselves with this statement.

A few weeks after democratic rule was restored in Haiti in 1994, the European Union (EU) joined international efforts to support and strengthen the country's democratic process. As democratization and good governance constitute key priorities for the Union, we are committed to assist Haiti in building democratic institutions, reforming its judiciary and creating an efficient civil service. Consequently, the Union is financing projects in those fields.

In this context, I should like to mention the EU structural adjustment support programmes for Government ministries and our substantial contribution to the establishment of the Commission on Truth and Justice in this regard.

Furthermore, substantial resources have been made available for emergency assistance and for rehabilitation programmes to rebuild Haiti's infrastructure and power-generation capacity, as well as for a number of smaller projects. Today, the Union is the largest donor in Haiti, with contributions from the European Community budget amounting to some 300 million ECUs — $351 million — on top of assistance from individual Member States.

The European Union remains gravely concerned at the continuing constitutional crisis and political stalemate in Haiti and their repercussions on the rehabilitation, economic recovery and development processes, which would benefit enormously from political stabilization. We would like to stress that external assistance and public and private investments can produce sustainable results only if good governance and the rule of law provide the necessary preconditions for economic and social progress. Otherwise, the efforts made and monies spent will be considered as wasted, with negative consequences for future support and investments.

The European Union expressed its satisfaction at the holding of free and fair elections in 1995 and 1996. However, we were concerned at the atmosphere surrounding the electoral process in 1997. The political situation following the resignation of the Government has not improved since that time, which is a matter of utmost concern to us. We deplore the fact that, in a period of 18 months, no progress has been made towards ending the political stalemate and towards allowing the appointment of a Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government.

The European Union also deplores the fact that the elections planned for November 1998 have once again been postponed and that no alternative date has so far been set. We would like to take this opportunity to call upon the Haitian authorities concerned and the political leaders to enable the Haitian people to express their wishes as soon as possible through free, fair and transparent elections. These elections should offer citizens the widest range of opinions and choices in order to build their confidence in the democratic process. In this connection, we would like to stress the importance of democratic rules and procedures, which must be agreed upon as a matter of urgency.

I should also like to reiterate the fact that the European Union stands ready to provide electoral assistance as soon as the Government and the political parties have reached a consensus on the organization of the elections.

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. A decade of social and political upheaval has resulted in the collapse of its economy and has seriously affected the very fabric of its society. A large majority of Haitians live below the threshold of absolute poverty. People's living conditions are deplorable. Environmental degradation and natural disasters such as the recent Hurricane Georges have contributed to their further deterioration. Despite some encouraging signs, the economy has not yet got off the ground since democratic rule created new opportunities for recovery in 1994.

The lack of a functioning government and the weakness of Haitian institutions have had a negative impact on law and order and, in this context, on the protection, respect and promotion of human rights. Although some progress has been achieved in certain areas, Haiti's judicial system and National Police are, for the time being, providing only limited services to the country's population and are still largely dependent on external assistance with regard to their reform, restructuring and strengthening and to the training of personnel.

The European Union stresses the fact that tangible progress in the implementation of judicial reform leading to the establishment of an independent, impartial and effective judiciary constitutes a crucial element of the democratization process and is fundamental to democratic policing and to the fight against impunity. We therefore call upon the Haitian authorities concerned to give highest priority to the process of judicial reform.

Faced with a situation of increasing lawlessness and armed crime, a surge in drug-trafficking and sporadic incidents of civil disturbance, the Haitian National Police has tried to maintain discipline and punish abuses. However, we are still seriously concerned about reports of extrajudicial executions, acts of ill-treatment and brutality by the police and police involvement in drug-trafficking or other crimes. The European Union encourages the Haitian National Police authorities to issue a stern warning to all police personnel that violations of human rights, in particular those involving the unlawful, unnecessary or excessive use of force, will have serious consequences for the perpetrators.

The European Union notes with regret the persistence of irregularities in the prison system, including the detention of individuals after their sentences have expired, ill-treatment of detainees, the very large number of detainees who have not been convicted and appalling sanitary conditions. In this connection, we take note with interest of the establishment of the office of pre-trial detention supervision at the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince and would encourage an extension of this programme, as an important step in the process of restructuring the prison system.

For all these reasons, the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), whose mandate was recently extended by the Security Council by resolution 1212 (1998), the joint Organization of American States/United Nations International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), the United Nations Development Programme and a number of bilateral programmes continue to play an indispensable role in Haiti.

The European Union fully supports MIPONUH's and MICIVIH's complementary efforts to help build up and train a fully functioning, professional National Police force, to foster respect for human rights by police personnel and to improve relations between the police, communities and the judiciary.

We express our appreciation to MICIVIH for its valuable work aimed at enhancing respect for human rights through the monitoring of and technical assistance to the police force, the prison administration, the justice system and the Office of the Ombudsman, in order to consolidate democracy and assist in reforming and strengthening Haiti's judicial system. We also commend MICIVIH on its role as an active organizer and promoter of successful human rights education and awareness programmes.

The European Union therefore supports the extension of the United Nations component of MICIVIH for a period of one year with the current mandate and staff level, as recommended by the Secretary-General and requested earlier by the President of Haiti. The member States of the European Union have also co-sponsored this draft resolution.

Ms. Aguiar (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In one of the best-informed and most valuable works about the Caribbean region, entitled *El Caribe, frontera imperial*, the writer and former President of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Juan Bosch, analyses the sensitive historical relationship of the peoples of the Caribbean with the great imperial Powers over a period of more than five centuries. The author establishes that, in many cases, this system of coexistence produced unfortunate confrontations, events that stamped our region with a most distinctive character of fragmented histories and diverse cultures and languages, yet always aspiring to unity in diversity.

Recent years have yielded closer and closer relations, a tightening of the bonds that unite us as a region, an implicit recognition that we all share a common destiny. As evidence of this, our hemispheric region of Latin America and the Caribbean, almost in concert, has striven over the years to coordinate efforts to preserve and strengthen democracy, justice and human rights. We have strengthened our capacities and expanded our efforts to promote democratic reform at the regional and local levels, to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families, to improve the capacities of our judicial and education systems to meet the needs of our peoples, and to encourage the existence of well-established and active civil societies.

We are committed to defending democracy against the grave threats of corruption, terrorism and illicit drugs, while also promoting peace and security among our nations, mindful of the fact that our commitment to the principles of democracy will make it possible for us to create a hemisphere of shared values and of unity within diversity.

The delegation of the Dominican Republic has ventured to give this account of some of the policies that we are working to develop and strengthen at the regional level in order to highlight the clear and binding regional character of the future of democracy and human rights in Haiti. Here I should like to recall the words of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, delivered on the occasion of the ad hoc meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs held in Port-au-Prince in 1995. He stated,

> "Our region must offer assistance in response to the events that have taken place in Haiti. In doing this we shall once again be expressing our adherence to the aim of a democratic and prosperous Haiti. In fact, we will be signing a covenant of support for democracy in the Americas."

It is in the light of these realities that we in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as neighbouring countries sharing a single border, have stepped up and expanded our relations of cooperation and friendship by concluding a series of technical-exchange agreements in the areas of tourism, farming and livestock-raising, trade and investment, sports and migration. In this new context of our bilateral relations a Dominican President visited the neighbouring Republic of Haiti for the first time in more than half a century. This event, viewed together with the agreements we have entered into, shows the resolve and the efforts undertaken by our Governments to work together to forge the right path for tackling the problems we share.

In his report in document A/53/564, the Secretary-General recognizes the efforts of the Haitian authorities, with the valuable support of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), to enhance respect for human rights. In its activities in support of the Haitian Government's efforts, in the last year MICIVIH has carried out a broad range of activities in the area of supervision and technical assistance for the police, the administration of justice and the Office of the Ombudsman, as well as a wide range of programmes promoting human rights.

In March 1998, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recognized, in its general information on the situation in Haiti, that the Haitian Government had shown respect for the legitimacy of human rights. Although problems still persist in this area, the Commission itself agrees that in most cases these cases stem from structural shortcomings inherited from the past. Similarly, the Commission praises the advances made in this regard, thanks to the creation of the Office of the Inspector General, responsible for investigating abuses by police officers, and the opening of the Magistrates School and the national penal unit, both responsible for assisting in trials dealing with violations of human rights.

These advances notwithstanding, President Preval, in his letter dated 6 November 1998 addressed to the Secretary-General, recognizes that the task of institutional consolidation in the Republic of Haiti is not yet complete. Thus, in this new stage, MICIVIH must adapt its mandate to the current needs for strengthening the democratic institutions in Haiti to promote the establishment of a climate that will bring about the long-term consolidation of institutional democracy in Haiti.

Taking into account all these facts and the Security Council decision of 25 November 1998, in its resolution 1212 (1998), to extend the mandate of the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH) until 30 November 1999, the delegation of the Dominican Republic believes that now is a very opportune time to adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.57. In doing so, we will be reaffirming our commitment to the search for legitimacy and the need to forge a future of coexistence, solidarity and progress for all Haitians. In formalizing this commitment to the future, we will be fulfilling our duty of pledging ourselves to the future of democracy in Haiti.

The Dominican Republic takes the view that the international community has a fundamental responsibility in respect of the actions of Governments and peoples. This is why we are directly focusing our attention once again on the need for international organizations and their member States to contribute to this collective endeavour to establish democracy and to strengthen institutionality in the Republic of Haiti.

Future generations will remember the General Assembly for the leadership capacity, vision and determination that it has shown as it seeks to guide Haiti towards a new horizon of peace and development — for the good of Haiti itself and for the Americas as a whole.

(*spoke in French*)

Albert Camus said,

> "If man fails to reconcile justice and freedom, he has failed at everything."

If Haiti fails, then we will all have failed, too.

Mr. Giroux (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to speak in the debate on agenda item 43, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti", following which the General Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.57, which we hope will be unanimous.

But first of all, allow me to express our appreciation and thanks to the personnel of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), which, under the direction of Mr. Colin Granderson, who should again be congratulated on his exceptional and unfailing contribution, continues to play a key role in the promotion of human rights and the strengthening of institutions in Haiti.

The efforts of MICIVIH in the areas of prison administration, the judiciary, the Haitian National Police and the Office of the Ombudsman, as well as its active role in the organization and promotion of education programmes and human rights awareness programmes, are essential building blocks in the process of strengthening the rule of law and the consolidation of democracy in Haiti.

Undeniable progress has been achieved in Haiti in the area of human rights in recent years. However, we note, as do the Secretary-General and President Preval, that this progress remains fragile in the absence of well-established institutions. The task of institution-building is far from over, and the draft resolution before us today reflects this fact. Institution-building remains the priority task of MICIVIH, primarily through the provision of technical assistance to the various bodies of the justice system in the process of its reform.

In this respect, I wish to mention in particular the urgent need to continue reforming the justice system. This reform remains essential in order to promote respect for human rights, to professionalize the police and to strengthen institutions in Haiti. Canada adds its voice to the appeal to the Haitian authorities to mobilize the necessary political will to ensure the continuation of the reform, thus enabling MICIVIH to bring its experience and expertise to the exercise. We cannot stress enough the importance of the Haitian authorities' role in putting judicial reform on track and seeing it through to a successful conclusion, for without this reform the assistance of the international community would not have the desired effect.

The activities of MICIVIH in the area of protection, promotion and respect for human rights in Haiti should also be maintained for one more year. As the Secretary-General underlines in his latest report, the monitoring of human rights and strengthening of institutions go hand in hand. We subscribe entirely to this conclusion, as well as to the recommendation of the Secretary-General to maintain MICIVIH's activities for another year, as requested by President Préval.

This is the aim of draft resolution A/53/L.57, and Canada firmly supports it.

The close cooperation between the various bilateral and multilateral entities that are participating in the strengthening of Haitian institutions, particularly police training, is essential to ensure complementarity in the efforts being made. For example, MICIVIH's support for judicial reform is essential to the efforts of the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), whose mandate was recently extended by the Security Council, and to the efforts of States participating in the professionalization of the Haitian National Police. Conversely, MIPONUH is giving MICIVIH logistical and administrative support. MICIVIH has also taken part in activities undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to improve coordination between United Nations bodies working in Haiti. MICIVIH is also an outstanding example of close cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

In this regard, we note that in mid-May 1999 the Secretary-General will be submitting conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly on ways in which the international community can continue to help in the tasks assigned to MICIVIH. We welcome the dovetailing of this exercise with that of the Security Council, by which the Secretary-General is requested to submit recommendations on setting up a mechanism that can take over from MIPONUH. This convergence is not a coincidence. It is clear that the two exercises should be conducted in tandem, with the sole objectives of preserving the progress made and of strengthening United Nations support for the consolidation of democracy and respect for human rights in Haiti.

The protracted political deadlock in Haiti is seriously mitigating the effect of the efforts that have been made. Haiti has been without a Prime Minister for 18 months. Canada remains very concerned about this situation and its negative impact on the politics, economy and society of Haiti. We strongly urge the authorities and political leaders to pursue their efforts to find a compromise that will end the political crisis and enable the choice of a Prime Minister, a Cabinet and a government programme.

It is important that these efforts bear fruit as soon as possible, in keeping with the Constitution, the law and the democratic choice of Haiti. It is equally important that the people of Haiti enjoy soon the opportunity to express its will through free, fair and transparent elections, in keeping with the Haitian Constitution.

Canada is seriously committed to participating in the promotion of democracy, justice and the observance of human rights in Haiti. We are convinced that MICIVIH is a useful and effective tool to that end.

Mr. Boucher (Barbados): I have the honour to speak in support of draft resolution A/53/L.57 on the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti on behalf of members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are States Members of the United Nations.

CARICOM States welcome the positive response of the Security Council to the request of the President of Haiti that it renew the mandate of the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti, allowing it to continue for another year its commendable work in professionalizing the Haitian Police. In this connection, let me also express our appreciation for the excellent job which is being done by the United Nations Civilian Mission and to the friends of Haiti for their sustained support. We have taken note of the report of the independent expert contained in A/53/355, as well as of that of the Secretary-General contained in A/53/564. Together, they provide a useful overview of the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti.

CARICOM States have been persistent in their appeal to the international community to stay the course with Haiti in the long and difficult journey ahead. We recognize that the task is compounded by the absence of a culture of democracy, human rights and development through almost 200 years of national independence and that, given these initial conditions, progress will be slow and uneven. However, while the independent expert concludes that the situation of human rights has improved, he strongly emphasizes the urgent need for greater progress in several critical areas of concern and makes a number of recommendations in this regard.

The independent expert cites, in particular, the weakness of institutions in the administration of justice as the priority area for international support in transforming Haitian society, and the incapacity of the judicial system to deal effectively with the violation of human rights — in particular, women's rights and the rights of the child — the impunity enjoyed by human rights offenders, the lack of professionalism of the National Police and the deterioration of conditions in prisons. He underlines the importance to national healing of progress in these areas — progress that would help foster the needed perception that justice is not only being served, but is seen to be served.

We recognize that gains in human rights and democracy must be reinforced by tangible improvement in the living conditions of the Haitian people, the vast majority of whom have not shared in the fruits of development. Estimates by the World Bank put gross domestic product growth in 1998 at 2.5 per cent. Since this is just slightly higher than the population growth rate, per capita income growth will remain virtually stagnant. With private investment at a mere 5 per cent of gross domestic product, there are no signs of a strong economic recovery in the near term. On top of all this, Hurricane Georges ravaged the productive agricultural region of the country, leaving more than 250 dead. We extend our sympathy to the Government and people of Haiti as they cope with further suffering and hardship.

CARICOM States share the deep concern of the international community with the policy vacuum in Haiti. For more than 18 months, Haiti has not been able to choose a Prime Minister. In this climate, it has not been possible to formulate a national development strategy which sets out the policy priorities on which international assistance should be based. Yet such a strategy is crucial to addressing, in a comprehensive fashion, the country's social and economic problems so as to accelerate growth and reduce poverty. In addition, implementation of the project pipeline is being hampered by the political crisis which has gripped the country for much too long. Urgent steps must be taken to arrest further deterioration of the project portfolio so as to increase disbursements and add new projects in support of such basic needs as education, health and nutrition.

CARICOM States are reaching out to Haiti to effect its smooth economic and political integration into the Community. During April and May 1998, a CARICOM secretariat mission visited Haiti to assist in the preparation of the terms and conditions of Haiti's membership. These negotiations continued at CARICOM Headquarters in November. At this very moment, the Chairman of CARICOM, Mr. Kenneth Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, is visiting Haiti to discuss with authorities the political and economic situation and to assess the scope and nature of CARICOM assistance and support. While the legal terms and conditions of Haiti's membership are still being worked out, Haiti enjoys full participation in all the political and development forums of the Community.

We believe that the process of democracy and social and economic reconstruction in Haiti have reached a critical stage. The draft resolution before us reaffirms the commitment of the international community to continue its assistance to Haiti. It underlines the risks for democracy, economic and social development and respect for human rights of the prolonged political crisis, and urges the political authorities to come to grips with the situation without further delay. At the same time, it calls on the international community to stay the course with Haiti, given the fragility of the political, social and economic situations. Haiti faces a formidable task, but it enjoys much international goodwill, which it must foster and preserve. Haiti must redouble its efforts to secure its democratic future and make the right to development, too long denied, a reality for all its people. CARICOM partners remain committed to lending their support.

Mr. Lelong (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): My sincere greetings to the Assembly, which is meeting today to consider agenda item 43, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti", accounts of which are given in two different reports: that presented to the Third Committee by Mr. Adama Dieng, on 4 November 1998, and the recent report of the Secretary-General, dated 18 November 1998, which is before members in document A/53/564.

Allow me to express my thanks to all those who, through their work in this area, have demonstrated their concern for this issue: the Secretary-General, his Special Representative in Haiti, the Executive Director of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), the Friends of the Secretary-General on this question, the member countries of the European Union, the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and, in particular, those of the Caribbean Community.

We agree with the evaluations contained in the reports referred to above, which reflect both the positive and negative developments in the situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti. It is now vital that democracy begin to yield results and that it not be associated with misery, anguish and impatience, which tend to give rise to the dangerous process of authoritarianism. As mentioned by preceding speakers, the economic situation of the country is not advancing at the desired pace, and it has been worsened by the havoc wreaked on the most important agricultural production area of the country by hurricane Georges, which caused more than 250 deaths and material losses amounting to more than $500 million.

Haiti also faces a complex institutional crisis, and the protracted lack of a head of Government is one of its main manifestations. We are aware of the frustration involved in this situation both for Haitians and for our friends in the international community, who are accompanying us in our difficult transition to democracy. It is undeniable that the situation is not conducive to satisfying the people's thirst for justice and their aspirations to economic and social development, and it tends to generate certain negative consequences for the human rights situation in the country. But respect for the rules of democracy and constitutional order requires that we not rush impatiently into making decisions that could give rise to serious problems in the future. Negotiations are under way. A special session of Parliament has been convened to debate this question and to find a solution within the requirements of our constitutional order.

In his letter of 6 November addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the Republic of Haiti, Mr. René Préval, stressed that since the return to constitutional order, the Haitian State has benefited from the cooperation of the United Nations International Civilian Mission, whose analysis of the human rights situation has always been complemented by constructive recommendations to improve the functioning of key institutions that promote and protect individuals' rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Haitian State welcomes the progress made in raising awareness of the population concerning human rights and encourages initiatives designed to build society around civic values and forms of conduct. We must also note, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report, that the National Police has continued to make progress in maintaining order, that crowd control units are demonstrating increasing professionalism and that statistics show that the forces of order have made more moderate use of their weapons.

We cannot fail to note the negative impact of the repatriation of criminals of Haitian origin following completion of their sentences in North American prisons. These individuals, although born in Haiti, generally no longer have ties to the country and have no relatives or infrastructure that will receive them there, and they immediately form a criminal class that is sophisticated by local standards of criminal practices and capacities. In 1998 alone, more than 500 criminals have been sent back to Haiti, equalling one tenth of the National Police force.

The size of that police force must be taken into account in evaluating its performance. For, numbering 6,000 officers, the Haitian National Police has one agent for every 1,200 inhabitants, a much lower ratio than that of nations of a similar size, nations that are not at the same time undergoing a complete restructuring.

However, without denying the efforts made and the progress achieved, it must be acknowledged that much remains to be done. We continue to face the great challenge of establishing the rule of law, for which an honest, fair and effective judicial system is a key element. In his letter, President Préval underscores that the task of institutional consolidation is not yet complete. In this respect, the conclusion of a document presenting a strategy and a detailed plan of action for the implementation of the recently enacted judicial reform law should speed up the process of strengthening the judicial system in the years to come. In this context, MICIVIH, with its expertise and experience, will be able to facilitate implementation of the reform and to work with the judicial system in striving for greater impartiality, strengthened independence and systematic respect for constitutional guarantees.

Therefore, the Haitian Government hopes MICIVIH will continue its activities for another year, until 31 December 1999. Draft resolution A/53/L.57, submitted for members' consideration, responds to these concerns, and we call for its unanimous adoption.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.57.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.57?

Draft resolution A/53/L.57 was adopted (resolution 53/95).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 43.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.

United Nations

A/53/PV.83

General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

83rd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 8 December 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Opertti .... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Osode (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Reports of the Sixth Committee

The Acting President: This afternoon, the General Assembly will consider the reports of the Sixth Committee on agenda items 146 to 156.

I request the Rapporteur of the Sixth Committee, Mr. Rytis Paulauskas of Lithuania, to introduce the reports of the Sixth Committee in one intervention.

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania), Rapporteur of the Sixth Committee: I have the honour of presenting to the General Assembly the reports of the Sixth Committee on the 11 agenda items allocated to it, namely, items 146 to 156. The Sixth Committee this year adopted 13 draft resolutions and one draft decision, all of them without a vote.

I will start my introduction of the reports of the Sixth Committee with agenda item 146, entitled "Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/53/627, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is reproduced in paragraph 9 thereof.

Under the terms of that draft resolution, the Assembly would, in particular, appeal to all States parties to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the additional Protocols at the earliest possible date; call upon all States that are already parties to Protocol I, or those States not parties, on becoming parties to Protocol I, to make the declaration provided for under article 90 of that Protocol; and request the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session a report on the status of those instruments, as well as measures taken to strengthen the existing body of humanitarian law.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote, and it is hoped that the Assembly will do the same.

I now invite the Assembly's attention to agenda item 147, entitled "Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/53/628, and the draft resolution which the Sixth Committee recommends to the General Assembly for adoption is reproduced in paragraph 8 thereof.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the Assembly would, *inter alia*, strongly condemn the recent acts of violence against diplomatic and consular missions, representatives and officials and would urge States to take all necessary measures at the national and international levels to prevent any such acts of violence and to ensure,

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with the participation of the United Nations, where appropriate, that such acts are fully investigated with a view to bringing the offenders to justice.

It is hoped that the Assembly, like the Sixth Committee, will adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

I would like now to turn to agenda item 148, entitled "Convention on jurisdictional immunities of States and their property". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee has been issued under the symbol A/53/629. The Sixth Committee recommends to the General Assembly for adoption the draft resolution reproduced in paragraph 8 of the report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would, *inter alia*, decide to establish an open-ended working group of the Sixth Committee, open also to participation by States members of the specialized agencies, at its fifty-fourth session to consider outstanding substantive issues related to the draft articles on the topic, taking into account recent State practice, legislation and comments submitted by States, as well as to consider whether there are any issues upon which it would be useful to seek further comments and recommendations of the International Law Commission. It would also invite the International Law Commission to present any preliminary comments regarding outstanding substantive issues related to the draft articles.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote, and I hope that the Assembly will do the same.

I now turn to agenda item 149, entitled "United Nations Decade of International Law". The report of the Sixth Committee on this item is contained in document A/53/630. The Sixth Committee recommends for adoption by the General Assembly three draft resolutions, which are contained in paragraph 17 of the report.

Under the terms of draft resolution I, entitled "Action dedicated to the 1999 centennial of the first International Peace Conference and to the closing of the United Nations Decade of International Law", the General Assembly would, *inter alia*, encourage all States to participate in the activities set out in the programme of action and to coordinate their efforts in this respect, as well as to take appropriate measures to ensure universal participation in the activities pursuant to the programme of action.

The Assembly would also encourage the competent United Nations organs, subsidiary organs, programmes and specialized agencies, including the Secretariat, as well as other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, groups and individuals to continue to contribute to the discussions on the themes of the centennial on the basis of the preliminary reports and to consider participation in the activities envisaged in the programme of action.

The Assembly would also request the Governments of the Netherlands and the Russian Federation to prepare reports on the outcome of the centennial celebrations, as well as invite the Secretary-General to consider any activities to promote the outcome of the Decade, and would decide to consider at its fifty-fourth session the outcome of the actions dedicated to the centennial and to the closing of the Decade.

Under the terms of draft resolution II, entitled "United Nations Decade of International Law", the General Assembly would, *inter alia*, invite all States and relevant international organizations and institutions to provide, update or supplement information on activities they have undertaken for inclusion in the final report on the implementation of the programme of action to be prepared by the Secretary-General, which should also contain a list of major international conventions adopted under the auspices of the United Nations during the Decade in the field of international law.

The Assembly would also welcome the work of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the field of the peaceful settlement of disputes, including the adoption of its optional rules of procedure for fact-finding commissions of inquiry.

The Secretary-General would be authorized to deposit, on behalf of the United Nations, an act of formal confirmation of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organizations or between International Organizations. States would be encouraged to consider ratifying or acceding to that Convention, international organizations that have signed the Convention would be encouraged to deposit an act of formal confirmation of the Convention and other international organizations entitled to do so would be encouraged to accede to it at an early date.

The Assembly would also encourage the Secretary-General to continue developing a policy of providing Internet access to the United Nations *Treaty Series* and the *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General*.

The Secretary-General would also be requested to ensure that all necessary assistance is provided, including translation services, to implement the plan to eliminate the historical backlog in the publication of the United Nations *Treaty Series* within the next biennium.

The Assembly would also take note of the events that will take place during 1999 to commemorate the centennial of the first International Peace Conference and would decide to convene a one-day plenary meeting at its fifty-fourth session, on 17 November 1999, to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law.

In draft resolution III, entitled "Principles and guidelines for international negotiations", the General Assembly would reaffirm a list of principles of international law contained therein of relevance to international negotiations and would affirm the importance of conducting negotiations in accordance with international law in a manner compatible with and conducive to the achievement of the stated objective of negotiations and in line with the list of guidelines included therein.

The Assembly would recognize that those principles and guidelines could offer a general, non-exhaustive frame of reference for negotiations.

The Sixth Committee adopted these three draft resolutions without a vote. The Assembly may wish to do the same.

I now turn to agenda item 150, "Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its fiftieth session". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/53/631, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is found in paragraph 10 of that report.

The Sixth Committee had a thematic discussion of the report of the Commission for a period of two weeks. A dialogue followed between the Commission, through its Chairman and Special Rapporteurs, and the members of the Sixth Committee.

The draft resolution, *inter alia*, would request Governments to submit their comments on the draft articles on the prevention of transboundary damage from hazardous activities under the topic "International liability for injurious consequences arising out of acts not prohibited by international law" and to submit to the Commission their most relevant national legislation, decisions of domestic courts and State practice relating to the topic of diplomatic protection.

The General Assembly would endorse the Commission's decision to hold a 12-week session in 1999, would take note of the Commission's consideration of holding split sessions from the year 2000 and would request the Commission to examine the advantages and disadvantages of such split sessions.

It is hoped that the Assembly, like the Sixth Committee, will adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

I now turn to agenda item 151, entitled "Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on the work of its thirty-first session". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee on this item is contained in document A/53/632, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is found in paragraph 8 of the report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would commend the Commission for the progress made in its work, reaffirm the mandate of the Commission to coordinate legal activities in this field, reaffirm the importance of the work of the Commission concerned with training and technical assistance and stress the importance of bringing into effect the conventions emanating from the work of the Commission.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. The Assembly may wish to do so as well.

Let me now turn to agenda item 152, entitled "Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/53/633, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is found in paragraph 9 of that report.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would endorse the recommendations and conclusions of the Committee contained in its report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session, including the recommendation that its membership be increased by four new members, one each from the African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean and Eastern European regional groups.

The Assembly would express its appreciation for the efforts made by the host country and would request it, in particular, to continue to take all measures necessary to prevent any interference with the functioning of missions accredited to the United Nations.

The Assembly would request the host country to consider removing travel controls imposed on staff of certain missions and staff members of the Secretariat of certain nationalities, and to continue to take steps to resolve the problem relating to the parking of diplomatic vehicles in a fair, balanced and non-discriminatory way in consultation with the Committee.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. The Assembly may wish to do so as well.

I turn now to the report of the Sixth Committee submitted under agenda item 153, entitled "Establishment of an international criminal court". The report is contained in document A/53/634, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly is to be found in paragraph 9 of that report.

By this draft resolution, the General Assembly would acknowledge the historic significance of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. It would, *inter alia*, express its deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Italy for hosting the Rome Conference, and call upon all States to consider signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Assembly would also request the Secretary-General to convene the Preparatory Commission to meet, in accordance with resolution F adopted by the Rome Conference, in order to carry out the mandate of that resolution, and, in that connection, to discuss ways to enhance the effectiveness and acceptance of the Court, from 16 to 26 February 1999, from 26 July to 13 August 1999 and from 29 November to 17 December 1999.

The Assembly would further request the Secretary-General to invite, as observers to the Preparatory Commission, representatives of organizations and other entities that have received a standing invitation from the General Assembly, pursuant to its relevant resolutions, to participate, in the capacity of observers, in its sessions and work, and also to invite as observers to the Preparatory Commission representatives of interested regional intergovernmental organizations and other interested international bodies, including the ad hoc international tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In addition, the Assembly would note that non-governmental organizations may participate in the work of the Preparatory Commission by attending its plenary meetings and its other open meetings, in accordance with the rules of procedure to be adopted by the Commission.

The Assembly would also request the Secretary-General to take steps in order to expand the mandate of the trust funds established in resolutions 51/207 and 52/160, and would invite States to contribute voluntarily to the trust funds.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote, and it is hoped that the General Assembly will be in a position to do the same.

I now turn to agenda item 154, entitled "Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization". The report of the Sixth Committee on this item is contained in document A/53/635, and the two draft resolutions recommended for adoption by the General Assembly are found in paragraph 14 of the report.

By draft resolution I, the General Assembly would, *inter alia*, welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the ad hoc expert group meeting convened in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/162, and would request the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization to continue its consideration of all proposals concerning the question of the maintenance of international peace and security in all its aspects in order to strengthen the role of the United Nations, to continue to consider on a priority basis the question of the implementation of the provisions of the Charter related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter, to continue its work on the question of the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, to continue to consider proposals concerning the Trusteeship Council, to continue to consider practical ways of strengthening the International Court of Justice. It would request the Secretary-General to continue to undertake efforts to identify resources to prepare supplements to the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs* and the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*.

By draft resolution II, the General Assembly would renew its invitation to the Security Council to consider the establishment of further mechanisms for consultations as early as possible under Article 50 of the Charter with third States affected by the application of sanctions under Chapter VII. It would request the Secretary-General to seek the views of States, the organizations of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other international organizations regarding the report of the ad hoc expert group on the consequences incurred by the said third States. It would reaffirm the important role of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination in mobilizing and monitoring the economic assistance efforts to States confronted with special economic problems arising from preventive or enforcement measures, and would decide to transmit the report of the ad hoc expert group meeting to the Economic and Social Council.

The Assembly would also request the Special Committee to continue to consider on a priority basis the question of the implementation of the provisions of the Charter related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions, and would decide to continue to consider within the Sixth Committee, or if necessary within a working group of that Committee, further progress in the elaboration of effective measures aimed at the implementation of the provisions previously referred to.

These two draft resolutions were adopted without a vote by the Sixth Committee. The Assembly too may wish to adopt them without a vote.

I now turn to agenda item 155, entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/53/636, and the draft resolution recommended to the General Assembly for adoption is reproduced in paragraph 10 of that report.

By that draft resolution, the Assembly would strongly condemn all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, wherever and by whomsoever committed. The Assembly would decide to address at its fifty-fourth session the question of convening a high-level conference in the year 2000 under the auspices of the United Nations to formulate a joint organized response of the international community to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Ad Hoc Committee established by General Assembly resolution 51/210 of 17 December 1996 would continue to elaborate a draft international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism with a view to completing the instrument and would elaborate the draft of an international convention for the suppression of terrorist financing to supplement related existing international instruments, and subsequently would address means of further developing a comprehensive legal framework of conventions dealing with international terrorism, including considering, on a priority basis, the elaboration of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. The Ad Hoc Committee would meet from 15 to 26 March 1999, devoting appropriate time to the consideration of the outstanding issues relating to the elaboration of a draft international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism and would initiate the elaboration of the text of a draft international convention for the suppression of terrorist financing. The Assembly would recommend that the work continue during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly from 27 September to 8 October 1999 within the framework of a working group of the Sixth Committee and that the Ad Hoc Committee be convened in the year 2000 to continue its work. The Ad Hoc Committee would be requested to report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session in the event of the completion of the draft convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism and, further, to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on progress made in the implementation of the Committee's mandate.

The Sixth Committee adopted this draft resolution without a vote. It is hoped that the Assembly will do the same.

Finally, I invite the Assembly's attention to agenda item 156, entitled "Review of the statute of the Administrative Tribunal of the United Nations". The relevant report of the Sixth Committee is contained in document A/53/637, and the draft decision recommended for adoption by the General Assembly is reproduced in paragraph 6 of the report.

In the draft decision, the General Assembly, desiring to review the provisions of the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and mindful of the comments made by States in this regard at its fifty-third session, would decide to include the item entitled "Review of the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal" in the agenda of its fifty-fourth session.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. The Assembly may wish to do the same.

Before concluding, I should also like to inform the Assembly that at its 13th meeting, on 26 October, under agenda item 154, entitled "Report of the Special

Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization", the Sixth Committee requested its Chairman to transmit without delay the observations submitted by the International Court of Justice in response to paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 52/161 of 15 December 1997 to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee for possible consideration by the Fifth Committee in connection with its agenda item 113. As members know, this was duly transmitted through the President on 27 October 1998.

This concludes my introduction of the reports of the Sixth Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to express our gratitude to the President for the assistance he accorded to the work of the Sixth Committee during this session. I also wish to thank the members of the Bureau of the Sixth Committee — the Chairman, Ambassador Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan, and the Vice-Chairpersons, Mrs. Socorro Flores Liera, Mr. Phakiso Mochochoko and Mr. Hendrikus Verweij — for the valuable advice, support and friendship they offered me.

My sincere gratitude goes also to the Chairpersons of the working groups of the Sixth Committee and to the coordinators of informal consultations for their diplomatic skills and efforts in bringing the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

Finally, I also wish to pay special tribute to the members of the Secretariat, in particular Mr. Roy Lee, Mr. Manuel Rama-Montaldo and Ms. Sachiko Kuwabara-Yamamoto, for the invaluable assistance they provided to me throughout the session and in the preparation of the various reports of the Sixth Committee.

We will all miss Mr. Roy Lee, who will be retiring this year from the United Nations after dedicating more than 30 years to the international civil service. I am convinced that with his deep and thorough knowledge of contemporary law issues, his lectures at Columbia University and other academic institutions will greatly benefit future generations of diplomats. I wish him all the best.

My gratitude goes also to the interpreters, translators, conference officers and documentation officers, without whom our work would have been difficult to accomplish.

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Sixth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Sixth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I also remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Sixth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Sixth Committee, except in those cases where delegations have already notified the Secretariat otherwise.

I should hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Sixth Committee.

Agenda item 146

Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/627)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote.

May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/96).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those delegations wishing to make statements in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation joined the consensus for the adoption of the resolution under agenda item 146 because of our commitment to the methods employed by the Sixth Committee in the adoption of its draft resolutions. Nevertheless, my delegation has a few comments on certain paragraphs of this resolution. We would have preferred the wording to be different.

We are profoundly convinced of the value of the noble principles concerning armed conflicts contained in the Geneva Conventions and its Protocols and in international humanitarian law. We are also convinced of the need to respect and ensure respect for its rules under all circumstances, within the framework of relevant international instruments. This is why the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic affirms the need and importance of complying with international humanitarian law and making it more effective.

My delegation believes that it would have been preferable to welcome the holding of the meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on the Protection of War Victims to deal with the general problems regarding the Geneva Conventions, a recommendation made by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session in resolution ES-10/5. The General Assembly was invited to do so in order to bring together the depository States and the States parties. The depository States were also to discharge their responsibilities as depositories of that international instrument.

In this connection, we reaffirm the need to hold as soon as possible an international conference of the contracting parties to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

The first Protocol approved by the international community stipulates that every State has the duty, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, to refrain in its international relations from the use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of any State. There is nothing in the Geneva Conventions which could be interpreted as giving legitimacy to occupation, aggression or the use of force in a manner which contravenes the Charter.

The fourth paragraph of article 1 of Protocol I deals with armed conflicts in which peoples are fighting against alien occupation, colonial domination and racist regimes in the framework of the exercise by peoples of their right of self-determination. For this reason, our delegation believes that the meeting held in Geneva on 27-29 October 1998 was a prelude to a meeting of the parties, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session — ES-10/2, ES-10/3, ES-10/4 and ES-10/5 — in order to consider the implementation of Protocol I of the Convention with regard to Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied by Israel and to find a mechanism that can ensure compliance with and implementation of the Geneva Conventions. The meeting should also consider Israel's refusal to apply these Protocols and Conventions, especially Protocol I, to the occupied territories. The fact is that Israel continues on a daily basis to commit crimes against civilians under occupation. Those crimes include torture, massacres, rape, hostage-taking, arrests, deportation, transfer of populations, creation of settlements, bombing of homes and confiscation of property, among others.

The international community must ensure that States respect the Conventions, in accordance with article 1 of the Fourth Convention, which stipulates that all States must undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the Convention. Since Israel is not respecting these Conventions, States parties are duty-bound, in accordance with that article, to ensure compliance with them and to take all necessary measures to induce the States that are violating the Conventions to respect them and their provisions.

Lastly, allow me to quote the High Commissioner for Human Rights, speaking at the conclusion of the Geneva meeting: when the provisions of the Fourth Convention are being violated, and when the lives of a people are being threatened, then any delay in the convening of a conference of the parties to the Fourth Convention is tantamount to complicity with whoever is violating those commitments. Respect for human rights and the application of international humanitarian law cannot be deferred on political grounds.

Mr. Gomaa (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation has asked for the floor to explain its position on the draft resolution pertaining to the two Protocols relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts. The Egyptian delegation attaches great importance to the provisions of the Protocols Additional to the 1949 Convention, particularly Protocol I on armed conflicts of an international nature. These Protocols contain important provisions that are complementary to international law and regulate relations between the civilian population and the occupying Power. In this regard, we would recall that the international community has recognized that the 1949 Geneva Convention and the two Additional Protocols apply to the occupied Palestinian territories.

We reaffirm the need to convene a meeting of States parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention in Geneva pursuant to the request of the tenth emergency special session of the Assembly to consider ways to implement the Convention in occupied Palestinian territory. In this context, the Egyptian delegation would like to draw the attention of other delegations to article 7 of the First Protocol, which allows for the convening of a meeting of States parties at the request of one or more of the said parties by simple majority.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 146?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 147

Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/628)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/97).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 147?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 148

Convention on jurisdictional immunities of States and their property

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/629)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/98).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 148?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 149

United Nations Decade of International Law

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/630)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on the three draft resolutions recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 17 of its report.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before action is taken.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The agenda item on the United Nations Decade of International Law is of special interest to the delegation of Ecuador. On this occasion we believe that we should make all possible efforts so that international law can be developed as fully as possible and so that it can be a secure and well-established basis for the maintenance of peaceful and friendly relations among States. The very fact that the Decade was established for this purpose shows that one of the objectives of the United Nations is, *inter alia*, to encourage the progressive development of international law and its codification, as set forth in paragraph 1 (a) of Article 13 of the Charter.

In this respect, we believe that the agreements signed between Ecuador and Peru following a long process of negotiation undertaken as a result of the Itamaraty Declaration of Peace of 17 February 1995 is a clear example of this progressive development.

In fact, by means of these agreements, the two negotiating countries put an end to the Ecuadorian-Peruvian territorial conflict that had lasted for many years, and in doing so they have shown the world that international law is not static and cannot be allowed to stagnate. The conclusion of that negotiation shows that the Protocol of Rio de Janeiro needed to be supplemented in order to respond adequately to the needs and aspirations of the two peoples. Among the fundamental aspects of this progressive and modernizing development, we should mention the signing of the treaty of trade and navigation, in application of article 6 of the Protocol; a broad agreement on border integration, development and neighbourly relations; a basic agreement on the rehabilitation or reconstruction of the sluice of the Zarumilla Canal and related projects; an agreement on aspects related to the navigation of the border-crossing segments of rivers and of the Napo River; and an agreement on confidence-building and security measures.

These innovations that the two countries achieved in the field of international law are fundamental. Suffice it to mention by way of example that the Ecuadorian position regarding access to the Marañón River and the Amazon was specified in the treaty on trade and navigation, which states that Ecuador will have, for the purpose of peaceful navigation and trade on the Amazon and its northern tributaries, the rights that are stipulated in that instrument, which will be exercised freely, without charge, continuously and in perpetuity.

To facilitate these rights, two trade and navigation centres, each with an area of 150 hectares, will be established on Peruvian territory for a renewable period of 50 years.

Lastly, I would like to say that my delegation has received instructions to request, together with the delegation of Peru and with those of the four guarantor countries of the Protocol of Rio de Janeiro — Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States — that all these important instruments signed by Ecuador and Peru, with the inestimable assistance of the guarantor countries, be reproduced as General Assembly and Security Council documents. This will be credible evidence that the political will of States makes possible the progressive development of international law.

These are the reasons why my delegation supports draft resolution II contained in document A/53/630.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take decisions on the three draft resolutions recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 17 of its report in document A/53/630.

Draft resolution I is entitled "Action dedicated to the 1999 centennial of the first International Peace Conference and to the closing of the United Nations Decade of International Law".

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 53/99).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "United Nations Decade of International Law".

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 53/100).

The Acting President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Principles and guidelines for international negotiations".

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 53/101).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 149?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 150

Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its fiftieth session

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/631)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 10 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/102).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 150?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 151

Report of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on the work of its thirty-first session

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/632)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/103).

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 151?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 152

Report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/633)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/104).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 152.

Agenda item 153

Establishment of an international criminal court

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/634)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

I call on the representative of Colombia, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My country wants to express its satisfaction with the text of the draft resolution on the establishment of an international criminal court, which emphatically acknowledges the historic significance of the decisions adopted in Rome and which promotes the efforts aimed at having the International Criminal Court begin to function, especially through the request made to the Secretary-General to convene, early next year, the Preparatory Commission in charge of preparing the additional instruments to the Statute of the Court.

The adoption of the Statute of the Court by the United Nations Diplomatic Conference in Rome constitutes a milestone in the codification and progressive development of international law, and meets the aspiration of the international community to put an end to impunity for the gravest violations of human rights.

Colombia participated in a constructive spirit in the negotiations prior to the Rome Diplomatic Conference and voted in favour of the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. It is in that same spirit that we will be working within the Preparatory Commission and making a positive contribution so that the just, impartial, independent and effective Criminal Court that we all want can be established and begin to function as soon as possible.

For all of these reasons, it is an honour for me to announce that on 10 December this year my Government will sign the Statute of the International Criminal Court, after carrying out a broad process of study and consultation with State entities and various organizations of civil society in our country.

In doing so on the very day when the Assembly will be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government of Colombia wishes to underscore the importance it attaches to the establishment of the Court and its close link with the subject of human rights. On that same date, in Bogotá, the Vice-President of the Republic will officially launch the human rights policy of our Government — the flagship programme of the new Administration.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/105).

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the United States of America, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Ms. Soderberg (United States of America): On 21 October, the United States position on the Rome treaty to establish the International Criminal Court was explained in some detail before the Sixth Committee. Our views remain those set forth before that Committee, including our position that certain provisions of the current treaty text are unacceptable. However, we want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all Governments that worked so hard and in good faith to finalize the text of the resolution contained in the report of the Sixth Committee. This is a constructive resolution that merited approval by consensus.

The United States joined consensus on this resolution in significant part because operative paragraph 4 provides an opportunity during the meetings of the Preparatory Commission for a serious discussion on ways to enhance the effectiveness and acceptance of the Court among Governments. To be fruitful, that effort should enable a process to unfold, resulting in a treaty that can attract our support and that of other Governments representing large and diverse parts of the global population. We believe the effectiveness and acceptance of the Court will depend to a significant degree on the definition of the Court's jurisdiction and whether the Court addresses the fundamental concerns of a wide range of Governments. We also believe that the problems with the Rome treaty are solvable.

As we have said before, the stakes for international justice and for international peace and security are too great to accept anything but a serious effort to put this permanent Court on the right footing from the beginning. The advantages that can be derived from strong United States support for the International Criminal Court greatly outweigh any theoretical benefit derived from jurisdictional provisions that may not be effective, are objectionable under international law and run the risk of dividing us on an issue — international justice — that will be difficult enough to achieve even if we are in a position to act together.

The political will for international justice is clear. Now we must ensure that we can meet this enormous challenge in practice. The United States stands prepared to work with other Governments to create the most effective and most acceptable International Criminal Court.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 153?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 154

Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/635)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 14 of its report.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Report of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution I without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 53/106).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Implementation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions".

The Sixth Committee adopted draft resolution II without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 53/107).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 154?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 155

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/636)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 10 of its report (A/53/636).

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/108).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Today, the global call to combat terrorism rings out above all others and is gaining in urgency. Though this call has been tarnished, at times, by politics and derailed by certain interests, it remains a legitimate one that we fully support. It enjoys priority within the general framework of initiatives and programmes to maintain international peace and security.

The unilateral actions of some States against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others, with the ultimate aim of advancing an illicit agenda on the pretext of combating terrorism, are not only unacceptable as instruments of policy, but are in themselves acts of terror that create nothing but chaos, confusion and injustice. They have nothing to do with combating terrorism.

Though it may be difficult in some instances to identify the real motives behind some acts, the claim of the United States of America that its 20 August attack against the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan took place in the context of anti-terrorism activities is blatantly false and completely untrue. We have satisfactorily proved that the American attack was purely terrorist and had nothing to do with the lofty objectives for combating terrorism to which we have all unanimously agreed. It is pertinent to recall here that, last September in Durban, the Non-Aligned Movement, whose members comprise two thirds of the United Nations membership, clearly and unequivocally condemned the American aggression against the Sudan. The Movement also voiced its opposition to unilateral actions of States taken on the pretext of combating terrorism.

It is with this understanding that we submitted the proposal that has been incorporated in operative paragraph 6 of the resolution that has just been adopted by the General Assembly under the agenda item entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism". Our proposal initially followed the same language used at the non-aligned summit in Durban, but we tried to be flexible, as all will attest, in order to arrive at the consensus language now used in the aforementioned paragraph. That flexibility was the choice we made in the face of aggression against my country. Even the aggressor can in no way deny it and we shall adhere to it throughout.

Mr. Sergiwa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation joined the consensus on the resolution adopted under agenda item 155, "Measures to eliminate international terrorism", since it wished to comply with the working methods of the Sixth Committee in adopting resolutions by consensus. My delegation, however, wishes to explain its position on the resolution.

First, my delegation reaffirms its condemnation of international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Secondly, my delegation expresses its concern at the omission from the resolution of a clear definition of international terrorism. Thirdly, our support for the text should not be interpreted as applying to foreign occupation or a people's inability to exercise its right to self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the provisions of international law. Fourthly, our support for the resolution should not be interpreted as justifying State terrorism, which we consider to be the most vile and dangerous form of terrorism.

Mr. Akbar (Pakistan): Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We attach great importance to the work of the General Assembly and the Legal Committee relating to measures to eliminate international terrorism.

The General Assembly has been emphasizing in its various resolutions, including resolution 46/51, the need to address this threat to humanity in a comprehensive manner. The Legal Committee has to undertake this unfinished task. Acting on the mandates given by the General Assembly, it should address the issue of the definition of terrorism. This matter is of fundamental importance for combating this scourge. Pakistan fully subscribes to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement that the legitimate struggle of liberation movements for the exercise of their right to self-determination does not constitute terrorism.

In this context, we are looking forward to the work that the Ad Hoc Committee established by resolution 51/210 will undertake as the last part of its work, as duly indicated in operative paragraph 11 of the resolution the Assembly has just adopted.

The time has now come to address the outstanding issue of the definition of terrorism and State terrorism, and to distinguish terrorism from the legitimate struggle of liberation movements in exercise of their right to self-determination.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Ms. Willson (United States of America): We regret that the representative of the Sudan has not heeded your request, Madam President, that explanations of position made in the Sixth Committee not be repeated in the plenary and has restated accusations made against the United States in his previous statement. My delegation will not repeat our denial of those unfounded allegations, but refers delegations to our Sixth Committee statement in this respect.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to clarify that my delegation did not speak in explanation of the vote when the resolution was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 155.

Agenda item 156

Review of the Statute of the Administrative Tribunal of the United Nations

Report of the Sixth Committee (A/53/637)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Sixth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Sixth Committee adopted the draft decision, entitled "Review of the statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 156?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now call on the Observer of Palestine to make a statement.

Mr. Jilani (Palestine): We were hoping to make a short statement earlier, to express appreciation following the adoption by consensus of resolution 53/96, entitled "Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflict". We would like to refer to operative paragraph 8 of that resolution, which notes the holding in October 1998 of the Meeting of Experts on General Problems of the Implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which considered, in particular, the problems of application in occupied territories. The outcome of the meeting remains to be reported by the Chairman of the meeting to the High Contracting Parties and to the Secretary-General.

In this context, we would like to re-emphasize the importance of implementing the repeated recommendations of the tenth emergency special session. We believe that this would contribute to the strengthening of international humanitarian law and to ensuring respect for it.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Sixth Committee before it.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.84

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session
Official Records

84th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 9 December 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti .... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(g) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/108)

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): As indicated in the note by the Secretary-General on this item, document A/53/108, since the terms of office of Austria, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal and the United States of America will expire on 31 December 1998, it is necessary for the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session to appoint seven members to fill the resulting vacancies. The members so appointed will serve for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 1999.

After consultations with the Chairmen of the groups of African States, Asian States, Latin America and Caribbean States and Western European and other States, the President has appointed Algeria, Austria, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Nepal and the United States of America as members of the Committee on Conferences with effect from 1 January 1999.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of these appointments?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*) and agenda item 45

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(c) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/53/346, A/53/455, A/53/695)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.66)

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.66.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Mr. Kastrup (Germany): I am pleased to introduce a draft resolution on Afghanistan under agenda items 45 and 20 (c). I would like to thank all those delegations that have participated in the joint effort leading to the presentation of today's text. Extensive consultations with the sponsors, as well as with other delegations, have been conducted prior to the presentations of the draft resolution in an effort to secure consensus on it. I trust that, in keeping with tradition, the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

The draft resolution is sponsored by 57 Member States to date, and we attach particular importance to the fact that the co-sponsorship bridges all regional groups and involves Member States from all regions of the globe. I should like to express my special thanks to all of them, and I invite other United Nations Member States that have not yet done so to join the group of sponsors.

The following countries, which do not appear in the draft resolution, are also sponsors of the draft resolution: Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Iceland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Morocco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Tajikistan.

It is our deepest conviction that a durable settlement of the Afghan conflict can be achieved only through a ceasefire and the start of a political dialogue. Germany thus supports all United Nations efforts and initiatives as well as the activities of groups of interested States or international organizations to facilitate such a political dialogue to promote peace in Afghanistan. We are grateful to the Secretary-General, to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and especially to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, who, in a situation that could be described as "mission impossible", never lost their courage or their commitment to continue their efforts to move the peace process forward in Afghanistan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all United Nations staff members who have been, or still are, working in Afghanistan for their excellent work under extreme and often discouraging conditions. I would also like to recall the death of United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) Military Adviser Lieutenant Colonel Calo, as well as the deaths of Mr. Mohammad Habibi of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Mr. Mohammad Bashayar of World Food Programme (WFP), who lost their lives while performing their duties in Afghanistan. I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to their families.

The draft resolution I am introducing today covers both political and humanitarian questions. Let me focus on some of the most important issues in this draft resolution.

The situation in Afghanistan has, unfortunately, further deteriorated in the last 12 months. The conflict has escalated and the fighting intensified. Despite repeated international appeals not to launch military offensives against each other, both Afghan factions continue fighting and still seem to believe, against all evidence to the contrary, in the possibility of a military solution. Direct consequences of this fighting are the continuing massive loss of human life, killing, refugee flows, harassment, the forcible displacement of innocent civilians and extensive economic destruction.

We are deeply concerned by the increasingly ethnic nature of the conflict and by reports of persecution on the grounds of ethnic origin and religious persuasion. Credible reports reveal that mass killings and atrocities committed by combatants against civilians and prisoners of war are going on and have even worsened. Despite the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, foreign military support to the Afghan parties continued unabated through 1998. This military support included not only the supplying of arms, ammunition and military equipment, but also the presence and involvement of foreign military, paramilitary or secret-service personnel on the ground.

In view of this situation, the draft resolution expresses the conviction that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict. It calls upon all Afghan parties to cease immediately all armed hostilities, to renounce the use of force and to engage, without delay or preconditions, in a political dialogue under United Nations auspices aimed at achieving a lasting political settlement of the conflict by creating a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government acceptable to the Afghan people.

The draft resolution also condemns the continued foreign military support to the Afghan parties and calls upon all States concerned to strictly refrain from any outside interference and to end immediately all forms of military support. In accordance with previous resolutions on Afghanistan, the draft Germany is introducing today reiterates that the main responsibility for finding a peaceful solution to the conflict lies with the Afghan parties. Peace would best be served if the Afghan parties and the States with influence over them all responded to international appeals for a renewed and sincere effort aiming at a lasting political settlement of the conflict, based on the principles contained in the text before us.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. We are distressed about this downward trend, characterized by the widespread loss of human life and a worsening pattern of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Women and children have suffered most. Access to victims has often been denied by warring factions through blockades and other interference; thus humanitarian aid is being used as a weapon against the civilian population.

Among the sectors targeted for international assistance, the situation of women is particularly grim. The enforcement of edicts restricting women's employment and girls' education severely limits opportunities for women, prevents the full deployment of national female staff and is also resulting in the loss of livelihoods, especially among women and female-headed households.

We also deeply deplore the increasing hostility, particularly among the Taliban, towards the community of international aid workers in Afghanistan. This was manifest in armed attacks against United Nations personnel and in the expulsion of all international non-governmental organizations active in Kabul. Again, innocent civilians have to suffer the consequences. Let me be clear in saying that safety and security is a non-negotiable issue and a prerequisite for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, we note with deep concern the continued laying of mines in a country where 10 million landmines are causing at least 10 people to die or be injured every day. This is a concern of highest priority for my country. For that reason, Germany has provided 13.3 million deutsche marks for mine-clearance activities since 1994, in addition to its humanitarian assistance of more than DM 60 million since 1993. We will continue our support in 1999. The contamination of large areas with landmines and unexploded ordnance remains a major deterrent to the repatriation of refugees, the return of internally displaced persons and the rebuilding of livelihoods. It also remains a major hindrance to rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan.

The conflict in Afghanistan not only has international implications for the neighbouring countries, as we saw in the increasing tensions between Iran and the Taliban in October; its effects are also reaching far beyond the region. The continuing illicit production and trafficking of drugs and the fact that the situation in Afghanistan continues to provide favourable conditions for terrorist bases and training camps can easily affect every country on the globe and represents a serious threat to international peace and security. This draft resolution therefore strongly demands that all parties, and in particular the Taliban, stop harbouring and permitting the training of terrorists and their organizations. All Afghan parties, and in particular the Taliban, are asked to support international efforts to bring indicted terrorists to justice. We repeat our call to all Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, to put a stop to all illegal drug activities and to support international efforts to ban illicit drug production and trafficking.

Germany has always supported the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). This draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to authorize the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to continue its efforts to facilitate an immediate and durable ceasefire among the Afghan parties and to institute a negotiating process with all Afghan parties. It is important that UNSMA maintain and strengthen contacts with all the Afghan factions, in particular with the Taliban, as well as with all other interested parties and organizations, including neighbouring States and others concerned with Afghanistan. Germany also strongly supports the Secretary-General's proposal to add a new function to UNSMA. Thus, the draft before us endorses the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a separate civil affairs unit by adding a new monitoring function to UNSMA, with the primary objective of deterring grave violations of human rights and promoting respect for minimum humanitarian standards in the future. It is clear that this new monitoring function of UNSMA will not be easy to implement, and therefore today's draft resolution also endorses the Secretary-General's proposal to send an assessment mission to Afghanistan as soon as security conditions permit, in order to determine the exact mandate, composition and location of the civilian monitors. I wish to reconfirm that the work of this civil affairs unit will have Germany's full support.

Let me repeat what I said at the outset. We hope the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. The General Assembly would thereby send a strong message to the Afghan parties and the States with influence in Afghanistan — a message, following the Security Council's adoption only yesterday of a resolution on Afghanistan, showing that the international community is deeply concerned about the situation in Afghanistan; a message saying that we want the Afghan parties to renounce the military options and the States with influence in Afghanistan to use their influence constructively, in coordination with the United Nations, which we unanimously and strongly support; a message saying that we continue to care about the Afghan civilian population, their human rights and their suffering after almost 20 years of war; and a message expressing the strong will of the international community to bring peace back to Afghanistan.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Speaking from this rostrum almost a year ago, the representative of Russia noted various encouraging signs with regard to the situation in and around Afghanistan. Those signs were related to direct contacts between Taliban members and certain members of the Government coalition; to intensified efforts by Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan; and to the increasingly active neighbours and friends of Afghanistan — the "six plus two" group — which was making possible practical action to bring about cessation of the armed conflict and begin a political dialogue aimed at national reconciliation. Regrettably, those fragile expectations were not justified, through the fault of the Taliban and its supporters outside the country.

Blatantly ignoring the clearly expressed will of the international community to assist in the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan, and the desire of the Afghan people to reach a national accord and maintain the integrity of the country, the Taliban made another attempt to solve the Afghan problem by armed force, to extend their control over the whole territory of Afghanistan and to impose upon the people of that long-suffering country its regime based on religious fanaticism, extremism and intolerance for different ways of thinking.

Russia considers the escalation of the Taliban military action in the north of Afghanistan a real threat to the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and, together with the other members of the Commonwealth, reserves the right to take all necessary measures to adequately secure its borders in compliance with the existing international legal obligations.

We are particularly angered by the fact that the military expansion of the Taliban in the north of Afghanistan is being carried out with the direct involvement of foreign military personnel with the Taliban side in planning, logistical support and military operations. This has been proved by concrete evidence, including the fact that a significant number of non-Afghan military personnel have been taken prisoner by the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The extensive external military assistance only encourages the aggressive ventures of the Taliban, impairs the efforts of the international community to launch intra-Afghan negotiations and strengthens the claims of the Taliban to be the sole rulers of the country. It has led them to neglect the basic norms of civilized behaviour and to commit mass crimes.

Refusal to reach a stable ceasefire agreement; their unwillingness to cooperate with representatives of other political forces; assassinations of foreign diplomats, journalists and staff members of international organizations; mass persecution, forced displacements and even executions based on nationality or religious beliefs, including the slaughter in Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamyan; systematic and serious violations of human rights, including discrimination against girls and women; encouragement of illegal drug traffic; and support of international terrorism — these are just a few of the Taliban actions well known to the international community.

The new, even bloodier stage of the civil war unleashed by the Taliban, requires urgent and decisive measures to prevent further growth of the fratricidal conflict in Afghanistan and to forestall its spread to neighbouring countries.

The Taliban's strict compliance with the United Nations decisions, first of all on key issues of the Afghan settlement, is the only way to lay the foundation for constructive collaboration between them, and other Afghan parties, and the world community in order to establish a durable peace in Afghanistan.

The resolution the Security Council adopted unanimously yesterday contains a principled assessment of the Taliban actions and makes specific demands of the Taliban. It also expresses readiness to consider the imposition of measures, with the aim of achieving the full implementation of previous Council resolutions on Afghanistan. We note that the comprehensive draft resolution on Afghanistan currently being considered by the General Assembly also sends a clear message to the Taliban regarding the world community's view of how this long-term conflict should be resolved.

The Taliban leaders should long ago have realized the impossibility of solving the Afghan problem by military means. The Taliban should immediately cease military operations and, following the example of the Government coalition, agree to establish a long-term ceasefire and start serious negotiations on how to secure peace and national reconciliation in the country.

We fully share the Secretary-General's opinion that the Taliban cannot claim sole rule in such a multinational and multi-denominational country as Afghanistan. Their desire to limit officials of non-Pashtoon nationality who are loyal to them to nominal, secondary inclusion in their administration and to ignore representatives of influential socio-political forces and major ethnic and religious groups, does not solve the problem of creating a fully representative government. Such a government may be formed only after full-scale political negotiations involving representatives of the interests of all major political forces and segments of Afghan society.

Russia is of the opinion that the United Nations should play a decisive, coordinating and integrating role in the preparation of any plan for an Afghan settlement. In this context, we support Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi's efforts, undertaken on the basis of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We also support the work of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). We endorse the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish, within the framework of UNSMA, a civil affairs unit, whose primary objectives would be monitoring the situation, promoting respect for minimum humanitarian standards and deterring further mass violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

We continue to attach great hopes to the activities of the "six plus two" group, which will remain the principal international format for negotiations on the Afghan settlement. We emphasize the importance of thorough preparation for the upcoming meeting in Tashkent of the representatives of member countries, so that a single position towards the Taliban and other Afghan sides can be elaborated. Particularly, the members of that group could undertake to refuse to provide military support to the parties to the Afghan conflict and prevent the use of their territory for such purposes.

We support the appeal of the Secretary-General to provide comprehensive assistance to the population of Afghanistan. We welcome the fourth meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group which concluded yesterday, and in which representatives of donor countries, including Russia, as well as a number of international and non-governmental organizations, participated. We express the hope that the results of this meeting will contribute to the mobilization of international humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan.

The Russian Federation, despite its domestic economic difficulties, continues to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. During 1997 and 1998, the Russian Ministry for the management of emergency situations repeatedly provided humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan affected by hostilities and an earthquake. The total amount of that aid was approximately $600,000.

We demand that the Taliban ensure the safety of international humanitarian personnel and secure their free access to all areas under their control in order to allow for the provision of assistance to all in need of it.

We support the Secretary-General's view regarding the need to pursue a unified and coordinated international strategy in the field of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, which would take into consideration both the urgent needs of the most vulnerable groups of the population and the requirements of strict respect for human rights, especially those of women.

Russia is prepared to cooperate constructively with all Afghan groups and interested countries in the settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan on the basis of the resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Liechtenstein and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

Since last year's debate, the situation in war-torn Afghanistan has, unfortunately, not improved; it has further deteriorated. In spring and summer 1998, fighting again intensified. The conflict escalated, provoking alarming regional repercussions. As in the past, civilians were not spared — and, I might add, this seems to be part of the heinous strategy of the warring factions. Credible reports suggest that the grim pattern of massacres and atrocities committed by combatants in this civil war has worsened. Thousands have been killed; whole communities have been displaced.

At the same time, efforts by the international community to help and support the victims of the conflict — the vast majority of the Afghan people — have been repeatedly impeded by factions whose political claims have become ever more doubtful, since their behaviour most often does not meet even a minimum of internationally accepted norms and standards.

On top of the war-inflicted deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, floods and strong earthquakes added to the misery of the Afghan people by causing massive loss of human life and destruction of homes, crops and food stocks.

Afghanistan continues to be a place where human rights and international humanitarian law do not seem to exist for parties that themselves wish to be treated with respect by the international community. But it is impossible to ignore the plight of innocent civilians — especially children, women, elderly people, and in general, the weaker and more vulnerable segments of society in Afghanistan — whose suffering is untold. The Afghan factions, which usually blame each other for this deplorable situation, must not expect the international community to accept their general lack of commitment to recognize, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms and respect for international humanitarian law.

If there is a sense of leadership left among the civil war factions and those who represent them, they must realize that it is their first and foremost responsibility to stop the killing, agree to a ceasefire, end impunity in their country and, honestly and in good faith, enter into negotiations aimed at a political settlement of the conflict. Those who keep holding to the belief that military success and the rule of violence and terror will finally bring peace to Afghanistan must be told that theirs is a distorted and inhuman vision — a vision bound to fail.

The Union condemns the continuing practice of outside interference in Afghanistan. Those Powers that keep interfering in Afghanistan's matters in a covert and most destructive manner by providing Afghan factions with all kinds of strategic and military support, including the involvement of military personnel, should know that their activities have, this year again, not remained unnoticed.

Being strongly committed to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan, the European Union wishes to underline the particular responsibility of these third parties with regard to the situation in the country and in the region. We again urge all countries with an influence on the Afghan factions to use this influence in a positive and constructive manner in support of the United Nations peace efforts. We also wish to recall that the European Union continues to enforce the embargo on the export of arms, munitions and military equipment provided for in its common position of 17 December 1996 on Afghanistan, and we urge other countries to adopt a similar policy of restraint.

Lasting peace can be made, kept and built only in a spirit of reconciliation. A peaceful settlement for Afghanistan can be achieved only through dialogue and will have to aim at establishing a broad-based Government which represents the full diversity of Afghan society. It will not be found through further antagonizing religious and ethnic groups. The United Nations, and in particular the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Brahimi, and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan are doing their utmost to continue and promote the search for peaceful solutions to the conflict. But their efforts will, at best, have only limited results if the Afghan parties and those who continue to fuel the war in Afghanistan from outside only pay lip service to the restoration of peace in that country.

According to credible sources, Taliban militia groups were responsible for the gravest violations of human rights in the course of the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif and Bamyan this summer, thereby adding to the atrocities which have already been committed, particularly in northern Afghanistan in 1997 and 1998, by all sides involved in the conflict. Furthermore, the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan has further deteriorated, in particular in areas controlled by the Taliban, who continue to violate the human rights of women and girls, including through discriminatory policies.

We wish to reiterate that all this is a matter of deepest concern for the European Union. We should also like to stress the serious implications of continued discrimination, including denial of access to education and health facilities, employment outside the home and humanitarian assistance, for our future decisions regarding the distribution of aid.

The Union welcomes the joint effort of the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to prepare an investigation, to be carried out under the auspices of UNHCR, of reports on grave human rights violations.

The Union also strongly supports the Secretary-General's proposal, as outlined in his report of 23 November, to add a new function to United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, whose primary objectives would be to monitor and promote respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as to prevent violations of human rights in the future, and to that end establish a separate civil affairs unit within the Mission. We are looking forward with great interest to learning about the exact location, mandate and functioning of this unit after the return of the assessment team which the Secretary-General intends to dispatch to Afghanistan in this regard.

With deep concern, we have noticed an increasingly hostile attitude towards the community of foreign workers in Afghanistan this year, in particular among the Taliban, who have also taken the lead in imposing various restrictions on United Nations humanitarian agencies and international humanitarian organizations which have been operating in Afghanistan, thereby limiting access to humanitarian assistance for the country's needy civilian population. As a result of the Taliban's decision to forcibly close the offices of international non-governmental organizations in Kabul, these latter had to abandon their much-needed help for the misery-stricken civilian inhabitants of Kabul, who now suffer the consequences.

For the reasons just mentioned, the European Commission had to suspend funding for projects in Kabul. Being the major donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, we have helped the Afghan people through years of suffering and conflict. We earnestly desire to continue helping them. But aid can continue only where it can be delivered in an effective and principled manner, without discrimination, and where humanitarian organizations are able to carry out their work freely and safely.

The armed attack against two staff members of the United Special Mission to Afghanistan on 21 August 1998 in Kabul, which caused the death of an Italian national and left a French national injured, provided another, most shocking example of hostility towards the community of international workers in Afghanistan. The Security Council and the entire international community condemned this attack, together with the murder of two United Nations workers in Jalalabad. Despite urgent appeals to the Taliban to take immediate steps to investigate this heinous crime and to keep the United Nations informed of the results of the investigation, as requested by the Secretary-General in his statement of 24 August, there has been no tangible progress in this respect. The Union strongly urges the Taliban to fully and thoroughly cooperate in responding to inquiries concerning the murder and its investigation.

The fatal attacks on United Nations personnel and other threats to the safety and security of United Nations workers in Afghanistan, as well as systematic harassment, eventually forced the United Nations to withdraw its entire international staff from the country. The European Union fully supports the Secretary-General's call for credible assurances by the Taliban that they are willing and committed to ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the areas under their control as preconditions for the full resumption of United Nations activity in Afghanistan. In this connection, the European Union welcomes the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, which will provide an excellent, principle-centred basis for further strengthening the coordination of United Nations activities in Afghanistan once United Nations international staff is able to return.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the United Nations staff members who have been and are working in Afghanistan, for their outstanding performance under conditions of extreme hardship and insecurity. I should also like to pay tribute to those among them who lost their lives while carrying out their duties.

The killing of Iranian diplomats and the violation of the Vienna diplomatic and consular Conventions during the Taliban attack against Mazar-e-Sharif was yet another outrageous incident, which also caused tensions in the region to rise further. The Union condemned these cruel murders. We are deeply concerned about their alarming regional consequences. In this context, we would like to commend the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Brahimi, for successfully helping to ease those tensions when they had reached a peak. It will, however, require additional efforts from the Taliban's side to ensure a credible and thorough investigation of the crimes just mentioned. Furthermore, all sides concerned will have to exercise utmost restraint and comply with the basic principles of international law to allow regional tensions to lessen.

The repercussions of the Afghan civil war reach far beyond Afghanistan and its neighbours. In the complete absence of governance, the economy of Afghanistan is today substantially dependent on illegal activities, such as and foremost the illicit production and trafficking of drugs and smuggling. The illegal drug business causes serious damage to the member States of the European Union and many countries elsewhere. We therefore remain committed to reinforcing the fight against illegal drugs in Afghanistan. However, the evacuation of international workers from Afghanistan has affected the implementation of relevant programmes.

Furthermore, lawlessness in Afghanistan continues to provide favourable conditions for terrorist bases and training camps. This situation obviously has negative implications for peace and security in the region and far beyond. The European Union regards the combating of international terrorism as a high-priority political objective, and terrorist organizations' links and connections to Afghanistan are no exception in this regard. We also reiterate our call upon all Afghan factions, and in particular the Taliban, to close down training camps for foreign terrorists inside Afghanistan, and to participate in and support international efforts to combat terrorism.

With regard to mine-clearing programmes in Afghanistan, the European Union urges all Afghan parties to support and participate in these programmes. Furthermore, the European Union strongly urges the Afghan factions to put a complete halt to the use of landmines, which continue, and will continue for a long time, to take a very heavy toll on innocent civilians, and to keep respective commitments.

Let me also underline that the cultural and historical relics and monuments of Afghanistan, including the famous statues of Buddha in Bamyan, belong to the common heritage of mankind. We wish to remind the Afghan factions, and in particular, again, the Taliban, that these relics and monuments have to be protected from theft, damage and acts of vandalism.

As expressed in our common position of 26 January 1998, the European Union is determined to play an effective role in efforts to stop the fighting and to restore peace, stability and respect for human rights and international principles in Afghanistan. We will therefore continue to give our full support to United Nations efforts to promote these goals, including to further action as deemed necessary by the Security Council.

We support the Secretary-General's endeavours aimed at keeping interested countries involved in the search for a solution to the conflict. Let me, in conclusion, express again our sincere appreciation to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for his tireless diplomatic efforts and significant presence as a mediator, and to the members of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, led by Mr. Ngobi, for their continued courage and dedication.

The European Union supports the draft resolution before us, which has been co-sponsored by all its members.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): The United States is pleased to have worked once again with the sponsors of a draft resolution on Afghanistan to arrive at a consensus text on the difficult situation in that country. It was not an easy task, and for this we are once again indebted to the German delegation for its astute leadership.

Some years ago, Mikhail Gorbachev referred to Afghanistan as "a bleeding wound". Unfortunately, though the context has changed, his dramatic metaphor is still deadly accurate. Once a buffer State and for 10 years an active cold-war battleground, Afghanistan is nearing its tenth year of civil war. An entire generation of Afghans has known little but war.

It is fashionable in some circles to regard the fighting in Afghanistan as the customary state of affairs in a faction-ridden country of warlike peoples. But this attitude ignores the fact that for much of their history, the Afghan people have known significant periods of unity and peace. While it is true that Afghans have used force to settle internal differences, outside powers also have had difficulty resisting involvement in intra-Afghan disputes, often with disastrous results.

As the Secretary-General's report (A/53/695) of 23 November 1998 on Afghanistan makes abundantly clear, the current Afghan struggle is by no means solely internal. It would be wrong, therefore, to dismiss Afghanistan as a hopeless case of another failed State, particularly when its distress is due in part — and here I quote the Secretary-General — to "persistent outside interference in the affairs of Afghanistan". (*A/53/695, para. 69*)

In the conclusion of his frank appraisal of the situation, the Secretary-General states that the United Nations, under the able leadership of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, will continue to promote a ceasefire and national reconciliation in Afghanistan. However, he adds, the United Nations cannot do the job alone. In recognition of this need, the United States last year joined with the Russian Federation and Afghanistan's six neighbouring States to form the "six plus two" group of countries, under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

We share the Secretary-General's disappointment that the six plus two countries have not yet been able to foster a political settlement in Afghanistan. But let us be frank and acknowledge that the six plus two group includes members that support different factions and have different interests and concerns that must be reconciled if there is to be peace in Afghanistan.

Two of the six plus two members, Iran and Pakistan, have had to carry a disproportionate burden of the decades-long struggle in Afghanistan. Both still host significant numbers of Afghan refugees living in their territories — nearly 3 million today. Unfortunately, despite the voluntary repatriation of more than 80,000 Afghan refugees this year, recent fighting in northern and central Afghanistan has created new internal displacements and fresh refugee flows to the neighbouring countries.

Just as Iran and Pakistan have borne the burdens of the Afghan conflict, we believe they also hold the key to its resolution. The United States joins other Governments, the United Nations and the six plus two countries in urging the two Governments to seek an accommodation on Afghanistan. They should resume the promising bilateral dialogue begun earlier this year and find ways to harmonize their interests. Other neighbouring Governments can play a positive role. In this connection, we strongly support the initiative of the Government of Uzbekistan to hold a meeting of the six plus two group in the region, with the possible participation of the Afghan factions.

For our part, the United States stands strongly behind the points of common understanding adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the six plus two group here at the United Nations on 21 September. The common points, together with recent Security Council resolutions, the General Assembly resolution to be adopted and the talking points approved by the six plus two group earlier this year, are a virtual blueprint for a comprehensive settlement of Afghanistan's problems. I commend these as our best reply to the false notion that these problems can be resolved by military means. They cannot.

Tragically, the conquest of most of Afghanistan by the Taliban movement has created new problems, rather than solving old ones. I refer in particular to the vicious attacks on the Hazara people of Mazar-e-Sharif, including the torture and the killing of thousands of innocent civilians. This has only sharpened ethnic hatreds and divisions among Afghans. It has also exacerbated differences between Iran and the Taliban, leading to a near outbreak of hostilities between them only weeks ago.

The United States joins others in condemning the murders of the eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist by Taliban troops during their takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif on 10 September. In this connection, we also support calls by the Security Council and in the resolution before us for a thorough investigation into this unacceptable violation of the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations, and we fully support demands to bring the perpetrators to justice.

We remain acutely concerned about the presence of international terrorists in Afghanistan.

We join the draft resolution's call on the Taliban to cease providing sanctuary and training for terrorists in the territory under their control. In particular, we call for the expulsion of terrorists such as Osama bin Laden, who, along with several associates, is under indictment in a United States court for their role in the murders of innocent Americans and other nationals in Africa and the Middle East. These killers must be brought to justice.

In addition to the threat of terrorism, the absence of organized government or law enforcement has allowed Afghanistan to become the world's second largest producer of illegal opium and heroin. This problem will have growing long-term consequences for Afghans, their neighbouring States and beyond.

Similarly, the world community stands ready to provide major reconstruction and essential assistance to help reintegrate Afghanistan into the community of nations. The United States, which at present channels substantial humanitarian aid to the Afghan people through the United Nations and its specialized agencies, stands ready to mobilize greater resources for aid, technical assistance, trade and investment to rebuild the country's economy. Unfortunately, this promise must await a political settlement. We look forward to the day when

Afghanistan and its neighbours can coalesce around the formation of a government which, first, has the support of its people; secondly, respects human rights, including the rights of women and girls; and, thirdly, accepts the principles of the United Nations Charter and the covenants to which Afghanistan is a signatory.

In closing, allow me to salute the work of the men and women of the United Nations, who have struggled over this past year to assist Afghanistan, despite many dangers, setbacks and the tragic loss of three staff members. We look to the United Nations, through the extraordinary efforts of Ambassador Brahimi, the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and the United Nations humanitarian agencies, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the many dedicated non-governmental organizations, to provide life-sustaining help to the people of Afghanistan, and to promote the ultimate hope of peace. This is the hope that sustains us and unites us with those determined to end the tragedy of Afghanistan.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): The political and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan continues to be one of the international community's most preoccupying and pressing problems. Turkey enjoys strong bonds of friendship with the Afghan people and has an unselfish desire to see this tragically divided, war-torn country emerge as a stable, peaceful and prosperous nation. All the countries of the region, especially Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, suffer without exception from the negative consequences and implications of the Afghan conflict.

We very much regret that the international community's strong calls for a peaceful solution to the problem and the collective diplomatic efforts launched in that direction were blatantly ignored, especially by one of the parties to the conflict.

On the contrary, the conflict has taken on disturbing proportions. The prospect that it will spill over into the region carries with it the potential to threaten peace and security in South-West Asia. The problems emerging as by-products of the crisis, such as refugees, the illicit cultivation and trafficking of narcotic drugs and the sheltering of international terrorism, have assumed perilous transborder dimensions with international implications. In Afghanistan, drugs, terrorism and arms are creating a vicious circle, destructive to all, and the struggle against this vicious circle requires the political determination of all.

The ethnic and religious nature of the conflict has led to gross human rights violations, killings and displacements of populations in northern Afghanistan. In this respect, specific cases, such as the tragic murders of United Nations personnel and Iranian diplomats, remain to be thoroughly investigated by the Taliban. The Taliban's discriminatory behaviour towards girls, women and ethnic and religious groups is unacceptable by any standard.

The discontinuation of United Nations humanitarian assistance is adding to the suffering of the people. The displacement of local populations in northern Afghanistan and the dismantling of their economic infrastructure has created a dismal situation. The conditions for the resumption of United Nations humanitarian work must be created. The Taliban is expected to fulfil its commitments in this regard.

Military campaigns and outside interference have brought nothing but turmoil and destruction to Afghanistan throughout its history. The only viable solution to the problem remains the establishment of a broad-based, multi-ethnic government in which all the parties are represented. The parties can benefit from traditional methods, such as the *Loya Jirgah*, or from modern concepts that would lead to the establishment of a new representative body, acceptable to the people of Afghanistan. However, such a reconciliation process cannot resume unless a ceasefire is declared and a true dialogue begins among the parties. This stands as a primary task.

Collective diplomatic efforts, with the United Nations in the central role, continue to be the only efficient instrument which may lead the Afghan parties to a dialogue. The valuable activities of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in this respect should be given the full and unanimous diplomatic backing of the international community. The joint work of the Organization of the Islamic Conference with the United Nations in Afghanistan constitutes a good example of cooperation within the international system. The "six plus two" group and the Group of 21 countries with influence in Afghanistan need to enhance their deliberations on the problem with a view to adopting a more harmonious position. The work of these two groups can be enriched by the engagement of all the Afghan parties.

My delegation believes that the Afghan people have the necessary historical experience to rebuild their unity and harmony. Turkey has confirmed on many occasions its readiness to contribute, in collaboration with the international community, to such an outcome. I hope the draft resolution which the General Assembly will adopt, as well as the resolution adopted by the Security Council yesterday, will constitute a fresh step in this direction.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): Japan shares the deep concern of the international community at the fighting that has continued to rage in Afghanistan for two decades. Indeed, I regret to note that the parties to the conflict in Afghanistan have not shown any willingness to heed the voice of the international community and enter into direct negotiations towards a ceasefire or the achievement of peace. In August, the worsening security situation forced United Nations agencies to evacuate their personnel from Afghanistan. The Security Council responded by convening a meeting later that month, at which it adopted resolution 1193 (1998), and by issuing a presidential statement in September. The fact that those efforts have not resulted in any improvement in the situation is a source of grave concern. Japan hopes that the security situation in Afghanistan will significantly improve so that United Nations personnel can return to the region and resume their work as soon as possible.

In this connection, we welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Taliban on the issues of privileges and immunities of United Nations staff and of access to health care and education. My delegation also highly values the strategic framework and the guideline paper entitled "Next Steps for the United Nations in Afghanistan", compiled by OCHA.

It is also worth noting here that the resolution on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel was adopted by consensus on 7 December 1998 in this Assembly. The establishment of the Trust Fund for Security of United Nations personnel is a positive step, and we hope to see it utilized in Afghanistan in the near future.

I wish to convey to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Brahimi, the sincere appreciation of the Government of Japan for his effective efforts in defusing the tensions between Iran and the Taliban in Afghanistan and neighbouring regions. Japan concurs with the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General that it is necessary now to build upon the results of the efforts of his Special Envoy by dispatching a team to investigate the killing of the Iranian diplomats in Mazar-e-Sharif on 8 August. We also support the Secretary-General's proposal that the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) monitor the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, provided that the safety and security of the members of this new unit are guaranteed and its mandate is clearly specified.

The Government of Japan continues to believe that, in addition to peacemaking, the United Nations must play a central role in addressing a range of issues in Afghanistan, including improving humanitarian conditions, providing assistance for internally displaced persons and refugees and combating the production and trafficking of illegal drugs.

For its part, Japan hosted in Tokyo, on 7 and 8 December, the fourth meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group, whose efforts are among those being made by the international community to complement those of the United Nations. With the participation of Member States and representatives of the United Nations and other organizations, including Mr. De Mello, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Japan, which chaired the meeting, finalized a summary of the discussions, appealing for a ceasefire and dialogue aimed at the establishment of a broad-based multi-ethnic Government, as well as the early and full return of international humanitarian personnel, provided that their security and safety is fully guaranteed. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to humanitarian assistance based on the strategic framework and principled common programming. It encouraged the non-governmental community to strengthen its own coordination mechanisms. It also addressed the issues of natural disasters, landmines, human rights and gender, as well as drugs.

I should like now to touch upon some other Japanese efforts to improve the situation in Afghanistan. The Japanese Government sent a political officer in 1988 to the United Nations Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan and another officer in 1996 to UNSMA. Since the civil war broke out in 1979, my Government has extended more than $400 million in assistance to Afghanistan. Beginning in the spring of this year, in collaboration with United Nations agencies, it has been engaged in the Azra and Tizin projects in eastern Afghanistan, which are designed to assist the return of refugees from neighbouring countries. At the fourth Afghanistan Support Group meeting in Tokyo, which I mentioned earlier, Japan announced that it would extend $1.5 million of grant assistance for grass-roots projects over the next two years to support non-governmental organization programmes for Afghan refugees and displaced persons. My Government has also decided to provide $2 million to the Afghan projects to be implemented by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Japan supports the points of common understanding of the "six plus two" group, which encourage direct talks between the parties to the conflict with the aim of achieving an immediate ceasefire and national reconciliation. In that context, my Government has steadfastly and repeatedly called upon the parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and strive to reach a peaceful settlement. On 23 September, Foreign Minister Komura spoke to Foreign Minister Aziz of Pakistan, asking that he relay to the Taliban Japan's strong view that the situation cannot be stabilized through military means, but only through a political solution. Two days later, on 25 September, he conveyed the same message to Foreign Minister Kharrazi of Iran. During the month of October, Japan repeated that message to the Taliban directly, and called upon it and the other parties to the conflict to heed the call of the international community to make good-faith efforts to protect human rights, halt the cultivation, production and trafficking of illegal drugs and suppress international terrorism. It hopes that all the countries concerned will take active initiatives to address those issues.

On this occasion, let me reiterate Japan's concern at reports that the great Buddhist statue in Bamyan has been damaged, and to call upon all parties to ensure that this precious cultural artifact is protected for future generations.

In closing, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the German delegation for its active and constructive initiative in preparing and introducing the draft resolution, of which Japan has become a sponsor.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my thanks, on behalf of the Egyptian delegation, to the Secretary-General for the very complete report that we have received from him on the situation in Afghanistan. I should also like to thank him for the regular reports we received throughout last year, in accordance with paragraph 19 of resolution 52/211 B, on the progress made by United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). These reports reflect the efforts of the Secretary-General himself and of his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to bring about a political settlement to the crisis in Afghanistan in all its dimensions and to secure respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national unity of Afghanistan, with full respect for its ancestral cultural and historical heritage.

The report paints a worrying picture of the constant worsening of the military situation, and makes it clear that the warring factions have resolutely opted for the military option in order to secure control.

The reports describe the various leaders' appetite for power and their determination not to share the rulership of the country, to the detriment of the interests of the Afghan people, who have suffered war and its consequences for 18 years now.

There is also an indication of foreign intervention and of assistance to the warring factions. This was made clear when Kyrgyz authorities intercepted a train carrying armaments and munitions which was heading towards Afghanistan. This is in addition to the continuation of unidentified aircraft taking off and landing at airbases under the control of various factions.

Egypt is convinced of the necessity to stop the flow of arms and munitions into Afghanistan. This is one of the main factors that would create an opportunity for a political settlement without foreign intervention by neighbouring countries or others that have economic or security interests in seeing the present situation continue in Afghanistan.

The military successes of the Taliban movement have imposed a fait accompli and have made it harder to achieve a political settlement. This is why the international community and, in particular, the regional parties should step up their efforts to open a serious dialogue among the parties concerned and to raise awareness of the importance of showing flexibility and giving primacy to Afghan national interests over tribal and personal interests in order to establish a broad-based and fully representative government.

Since the killing of Iranian diplomats working in the Iranian Consulate at Mazar-e-Sharif, there has been a resurgence of acute tension between Afghanistan and Iran. The situation was made worse by the tendency of some of the tribes to carry out attacks on the personnel of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), causing the Mission to evacuate all international staff members.

Egypt energetically condemned the killing of the Iranian diplomats and the attacks on United Nations personnel resulting in the death of the Deputy Military Adviser as well as of employees of the World Food Programme and of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Jalalabad. Egypt categorically condemns these attacks and calls for the perpetrators to be arrested and brought to justice as soon as possible.

At the same time, there is a need to strengthen the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to make it possible for all refugees to return, to step up the demining activities and to prevent the production of drugs, since it is clear that the land area that is being cultivated for this purpose has risen by 9 per cent in the course of the last year.

Afghanistan must also be prevented from harbouring and training terrorists, subsequently exporting terrorism to neighbouring and other States.

Of course, all these activities require a return of United Nations personnel to Afghanistan, and they must be protected from attacks on their safety and security. We hope that the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General will be able to undertake efforts to this end as soon as possible.

The worsening human rights situation in Afghanistan is a cause of grave concern to the Government of Egypt because it accentuates ethnic and religious divisions between the various Afghan factions. Egypt attaches great importance to the Taliban's carrying out investigations and publishing their results. Failing this, there will need to be an international investigation on mass murders and the perpetrators will have to be brought to trial.

We believe that the promotion of basic humanitarian norms and the prevention of massive violations of human rights in the future cannot be attained without easing ethnic tensions, putting a stop to the flow of arms and munitions, and creating a rational rapprochement and national unity among the parties in Afghanistan. Therefore, we feel that the designation of civilian human rights observers in Afghanistan at this time is not necessary, especially in view of the very shaky security situation there.

Egypt is carefully following the activities of the "six plus two" group, which was established in order to facilitate a solution in Afghanistan, and we noted and welcomed the ministerial meeting held in September.

We share the frustrations of the Secretary-General concerning the powerlessness of some countries to bring the warring parties together and to agree on ways of stopping the flow of munitions and weapons, which fans the flames of conflict in Afghanistan. We hope that the group will strive towards building a society in which peace and justice will reign and not resort to a military solution.

We also welcome the meetings of the 21 countries that have influence in Afghanistan, the most recent of which was held in October. Egypt is striving to assist Afghanistan to regain peace and security, and to maintain sovereignty, independence, national unity and territorial integrity.

Egypt hopes that all States will attach the greatest possible importance to this issue. Moreover, Egypt stresses the importance of providing the necessary economic assistance to Afghanistan. We also follow with great interest the discussions that have taken place in the Security Council on the question of Afghanistan, which led to the adoption of resolution S/1214 (1998), many of whose provisions are reflected in the draft resolution now before the Assembly, which calls for a peaceful settlement in the nearest possible future, which can be achieved if external parties and the Afghan factions alike commit themselves to its observance.

In conclusion, allow me to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, for his sustained efforts throughout the last year, and also to praise the courage and perseverance of United Nations personnel working in Afghanistan, who have admirably fulfilled their mission in extremely difficult circumstances.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/53/695, and also his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, for all his efforts. I would like to place on record that we are very grateful to him and his colleagues in the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) for their tireless efforts, which removed some of the additional problems in Afghanistan caused by the murder of Iranian diplomats and a journalist by the Taliban in Mazar-e-Sharif on 8 August this year. Ambassador Brahimi's mission succeeded in securing the return of the bodies of the Iranians killed and the release of those interned in Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to see to it that those responsible for the cold-blooded murder of its diplomatic personnel and the correspondent of the Islamic Republic News Agency in Mazar-e-Sharif are apprehended and brought to justice in keeping with international standards of fair trial.

This is a very important pending issue between Iran and the Taliban. In this connection, the Secretary-General has also expressed, in paragraph 72 of his report, his sincere hope that his "Special Envoy's achievements will continue to be built upon, *inter alia*, by prosecuting those responsible for the murders".

The core problem in Afghanistan, however, goes beyond the Iranian-related issue, and centres around the threat which the status quo in Afghanistan poses to regional and international peace and security on the one hand and the unacceptable, inhumane and horrifying situation to which millions of Afghan people are now subjected on the other. Yesterday, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan and I had the opportunity to make statements in the Security Council on the question of Afghanistan. He lamented, and I agree with him, that "Pakistan has also been a victim of terrorism, drug trafficking and arms smuggling as a result of conditions inside Afghanistan" (*S/PV.3952, p.24*). This is exactly what all neighbours of Afghanistan fear about the continuation of the status quo in Afghanistan. I venture to suggest that the regional instability resulting from conditions inside Afghanistan is likely to increase and to foment further ethnic and religious hatred and violence in the wider region. Areas of serious concern for the international community in general and for most of Afghanistan's neighbours in particular with respect to the continuation of the status quo in that country include the following: the destabilizing effects for the region of continued conflict and the insistence of the Taliban on a military solution; the rejection of a ceasefire and of all efforts aimed at finding a political solution; the methodical killing spree by the Taliban aimed at members of ethnic and religious minorities in northern Afghanistan; the continued door-to-door manhunt for members of the Hazara community; the Taliban's brute-force rule, which creates a big prison for the Afghan people, including the regular Pashtoons; the deteriorating situation of women and girls in all areas under the control of the Taliban — women and girls continue to be denied access to adequate health care, education, employment and, at times, humanitarian assistance; the increasing problem of drug production and trafficking as the main internal source of income to finance the war effort; the harbouring of terrorists, including those operating against neighbouring countries; the Taliban leadership's harbouring of territorial claims over several cities in neighbouring States, despite the internal chaos and other preoccupations; and the fomenting of ethnic and religious hatred and disturbance not only in Afghanistan but also in neighbouring countries.

These issues are real and have been substantiated by a preponderance of evidence and eyewitness accounts. The fact that the Taliban have closed northern Afghanistan to the outside world for four months does not simply make these issues go away.

In response to these areas of continuing grave concern, the Security Council yesterday adopted its resolution 1214 (1998), because the Taliban have refused to heed the repeated call by the international community and by the United Nations to halt the fighting and enter into a political dialogue aimed at establishing a truly broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government, despite the good-faith efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and his meeting with the Taliban leader. In the same vein, the General Assembly is today considering the question of Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to believe that, because of the historical realities and the traditional and multi-ethnic structure of Afghanistan, only a genuinely broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government which protects the rights of all Afghan people without distinction can bring peace and normalcy to Afghanistan and begin to remove the serious concerns I have just enumerated. The Taliban's claim that it is a multi-ethnic group is absurd. The suggestion that the Taliban has expressed readiness to broaden its ethnic dispensation — which, of course, would mean the Taliban leadership hand-picking some ethnic individuals — does not convince anyone, including the Afghan people.

My Government is committed to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. While the ultimate responsibility for bringing about peace and thus allaying the concerns of the international community, in particular those of neighbouring countries, lies with the people of Afghanistan, my Government supports and continues to cooperate with United Nations efforts, particularly those of Ambassador Brahimi, which have a central role to play in reaching the goals of national reconciliation and a lasting political settlement with the participation of all parties to the conflict and all segments of Afghan society.

In that connection, we support the initiative by the Government of Uzbekistan to facilitate the process of reconciliation by preparing the ground for a meeting of the "six plus two" group in Tashkent.

The treacherously long and cold winter in Afghanistan is bound to take a heavy toll on the Afghan people, particularly those displaced in central and northern Afghanistan. Emergency humanitarian relief assistance, particularly food, clothing, medicine and shelter, is in great demand in Afghanistan. We commend the Secretary-General for the coordination of all international efforts to deliver emergency assistance to Afghan people who need it, despite the problems faced by international and United Nations staff. We appreciate the efforts to overcome security problems in Afghanistan in order to allow the return of United Nations staff to Afghanistan to effectively resume the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. We also hail the meeting of donor countries that was concluded yesterday in Tokyo, and support the appeal to all States and to the international community at large to ensure that all humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan is coordinated with the United Nations and that it integrates the principle of non-discrimination among beneficiaries.

In the light of what I have said, my delegation is a sponsor of draft resolution A/53/L.66. I wish to place on record our appreciation to the delegation of Germany for the wide and long consultations and coordination efforts they carried out on this draft resolution.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Republic of Tajikistan is gravely concerned at developments in and around neighbouring Afghanistan. We regret that for more than two years now the many appeals by the international community, including through General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan have been ignored by the Taliban leadership, which has rejected negotiations and has continued to bank on a military solution to the Afghan problem, with direct and massive support from outside. Such acts by the Taliban have resulted in fierce resistance from their opponents in Afghanistan, a situation that is fraught with a new, more dangerous and brutal increase in military confrontation and an even greater receding of the prospects for the establishment of peace and stability on Afghan territory.

In their desire to establish sole control over the entire territory of Afghanistan through force, and in the practice of barbaric customs reminiscent of the Middle Ages, the Taliban are committing flagrant violations of human rights and international law, including international humanitarian law. It was with repulsion that we learned of the report of the Taliban's barbaric assassinations of Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazar-e-Sharif. We are deeply repulsed by the reports of wholesale massacres of prisoners of war and civilians in the north of Afghanistan and by the Taliban's brutal persecution of representatives of various ethnic and religious groups, as well as their discrimination against women. Such practices must be brought to a halt, and the culprits of those deeds must be prosecuted and punished.

The murder of the Iranian diplomats has already escalated tension in the region. We do not rule out the possibility that the Taliban's acts may further exacerbate the situation and lead to armed incidents on the Tajik-Afghan border and mass, uncontrolled flows of refugees into our country, which could include former participants in military operations and, as recent events in the Leninabad area have illustrated, could mean serious complications for the future of the peace process in our country.

When one takes into account the growing trend of turning the territory of Afghanistan into a bastion of religious extremism, a refuge for international terrorists and a world centre of drug- trafficking, it is evident that the alarming situation that exists in that country has created a threat to security not only in regional terms but also in the broader international context.

All of what I have said confirms the correctness of the political conclusion, drawn almost two years ago by the leadership of the group of countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States known as the Almaty five, that the acts of the Taliban can constitute a threat to peace and stability throughout the entire region of Central and South Asia. Recent events in the north of Afghanistan have also borne out the timeliness of the decision to create a troika comprised of the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to counteract religious extremism.

The Government of Tajikistan, basing itself on the fact that the present threat must not be allowed to undermine the process of national reconciliation, has adopted measures to strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border in sectors of heightened danger. We are prepared to take appropriate measures to protect our common interests and security, together with our partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Tajikistan welcomes the active involvement of the United Nations in efforts to bring about a settlement of the Afghan conflict, and we fully support the efforts undertaken in this context by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Brahimi.

We have co-sponsored Security Council resolutions 1076 (1996) and 1193 (1998) and all General Assembly resolutions on Afghanistan, including the draft resolution currently before the Assembly.

Tajikistan's position on an Afghan settlement is well known. It is essential to have an immediate ceasefire and to conduct peace negotiations with the participation of representatives of all opposing groups on an equal footing, so as to create a broad-based coalition government in Afghanistan that will protect the interests of all political, ethnic and religious groups of the country's population. The peace process in Afghanistan must be begun and conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the group of neighbours and friends of Afghanistan known as the "six plus two" group. We hope that the forthcoming meeting in Tashkent of representatives of that group of States will make a contribution to an intra-Afghan settlement. Tajikistan, for its part, is prepared to help those efforts in every possible way.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): Last year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/211 by consensus, and the people of Afghanistan once again placed their hopes in the United Nations to finally broker a negotiation process that would lead to peace and security. Unfortunately, the hegemonic policy of Pakistan, by patronizing the bellicose and rejectionist attitude of the Taliban, once again dashed any hopes for peace and security in Afghanistan. These policies have not only caused great suffering to our countrymen, but they have also generated a notable degree of fear and instability among the countries of the region, as we have heard from some our colleagues at this meeting.

This fear of instability has its roots in the real intentions and adventurist policy of Pakistan in the region and also in the spread of a retrograde and reactionary brand of Talibanism in the form of "Taliban internationalism", a doctrine that in certain parts of the globe has transformed a certain terrorist into an immortal hero. In fact, it is the hegemonic policy of Pakistan that has continuously prompted the legitimate reaction of the countries in the region.

Last year's resolution on Afghanistan contained lofty and superb ideas about peace and security in Afghanistan and the region. It also expressed concerns about some negative developments in Afghanistan that have serious detrimental effects on the region and beyond. The ideas and concerns reflected in the resolution are mainly as follows: first, continued violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; secondly, continued foreign intervention and involvement of foreign military personnel; thirdly, continued use of Afghan territory for the training and harbouring of terrorists and terrorist organizations; fourthly, continued production of drugs and expansion of drug-trafficking networks; and, fifthly, the need for the continued appeal that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict.

Allow me briefly to elaborate, one by one, on the points I have mentioned and to bring to light the truth about who has done what in Afghanistan during the past year.

Gross and flagrant abuses of human rights by the Taliban have been reported by Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; Mr. Paik, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan; and the world media. Those reports have provided detailed information about the Taliban's total disregard for the life, liberty and security of the population under its military occupation, particularly gender apartheid and an array of discriminatory policies toward major ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

On 12 March 1998, Mr. Paik submitted his report, contained in document E/CN.4/1998/71, to the Commission on Human Rights. He had visited a number of provinces inside Afghanistan, including the capital, Kabul, occupied by the Taliban mercenary group since September 1996. The Special Rapporteur realized that the situation of human rights had deteriorated, especially in the areas under the control of the Taliban. In paragraph 19 of the report, we read that Kabul has virtually turned into a "ghost town". Men and women alike fear being stopped or harassed by the Taliban police, and this, coupled with the drastic reduction in the population's purchasing power owing to the devaluation of Afghan currency as a result of the disastrous economy of war, has rendered the city streets practically deserted, even in the middle of the day. Human rights abuses, according to the observation of the Special Rapporteur in Kabul, have become more institutionalized, more systematic and more insidious. It is very sad that some representatives here have spoken of the "Kabul authorities".

With regard to the human rights of women and girls and their right to education, employment and access to health services, the Special Rapporteur indicates in paragraph 25 that nothing has changed for the better. The religious police harass and beat unaccompanied women, and a four-year-old boy is acceptable as a chaperone for an educated adult woman. In fact, the Associated Press reported on 2 December that a new Taliban rule has ordered buses carrying only women to be shrouded in curtains to hide the driver from the female passengers.

It is worth mentioning here that the Special Rapporteur indicated that before the occupation of Kabul by the Taliban mercenaries, women accounted for 70 per cent of all teachers, about 50 per cent of civil servants and an estimated 40 per cent of medical doctors. In addition, well over 5,000 students, about half of all students in Kabul University, were girls.

As to violations of international humanitarian law, crimes against humanity, crimes of war, genocide and "ethnic cleansing" by the Taliban mercenaries, the international news media and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, particularly in his report of 26 October 1998, have amply written about them. The Special Rapporteur, in his account of the Taliban invasion and occupation of Mazar-e-Sharif on 8 August 1998, — and this was mentioned by many of my colleagues here — uses the term "killing frenzy" when referring to an incident described in an article, dated 1 November 1998, that was published in *The Sunday Times* (London), entitled "How the Taliban slaughtered 8,000". The systematic and planned killing, deportation, rape, summary execution, abduction, arbitrary detention and looting was perpetrated by the Taliban while Pakistani military personnel accompanied and assisted the Taliban. The Special Rapporteur specifically referred to them as "Punjabi Taliban", indicating their origin to be the Pakistani province of Punjab.

The estimated total number of those killed in the Mazar-e-Sharif "killing frenzy" ranges from 8,000 to 12,000. However, a Human Rights Watch report states that that incident

> "represents one of the single worst examples of killing of civilians in Afghanistan's 20-year war" *("Afghanistan: The massacre in Mazar-e-Sharif"; November 1998, Vol. 10, No. 7).*

Unfortunately, all of this continues to happen in a country that half a century ago actively contributed to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Secondly, last year's resolution firmly expressed its concerns about foreign intervention in Afghanistan and called upon all States to refrain from intervening in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. In addition, Security Council resolution 1193 (1998) of 28 August 1998 called upon all States to take resolute measures to prohibit their military personnel from planning and participating in military operations in Afghanistan. Yet, in total defiance of the desire expressed by the international community, the Pakistani military intelligence service — Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) — and Pakistani military personnel have become more active in the Taliban military operations inside Afghanistan, with the malicious purpose of realizing what an Indian-weary-Pakistan has always called "strategic depth", as openly declared by the then Pakistani Foreign Minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, in an interview published last July in the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*.

The massive involvement of Pakistani military units in August 1998 in northern Afghanistan and the capture of hundreds of Pakistani prisoners of war — confirmed by visits by the United Nations Special Mission to

Afghanistan (UNSMA) and the Special Rapporteur — are undeniable evidence of Pakistani aggression in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, international television, including CNN, showed numerous Pakistanis injured by the Tomahawk missiles which targeted terrorist centres inside Taliban-held territories of Afghanistan. CNN also showed the leader of the notorious Pakistani extremist organization Harkat-ul-Mujahideen — formerly Harkat-ul-Ansar — during a press conference at which he stated that he would launch acts of revenge because his men had been killed by the missiles.

In addition, the day after the missile attacks, on 21 August 1998, Lieutenant Colonel Carmine Calo, the military adviser of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan — an Italian national — was brutally gunned down by two Pakistani terrorists, assigned to Kabul along with hundreds of other Pakistani terrorists. I wish to convey the heartfelt sympathy of my delegation and my Government to the family of Lieutenant Colonel Carmine Calo.

The report of the Secretary-General dated 2 October 1998 mentions that

> "UNSMA has received reports of large numbers of non-Afghans, most of allegedly Pakistani origin, engaging in all aspects of the fighting alongside the Taliban." *(A/53/455, para. 7)*

It further reads that "UNSMA has been shown and has interviewed in Bamyan a number of captured fighters", all of whom "admitted to being Pakistani" (ibid.). Thus, as we outlined in our letters annexed to document A/53/468, it is quite clear that without the active involvement of Pakistani military personnel, numbering well beyond 35,000, which, *inter alia*, operate training camps and administrative networks, the Taliban subjugation of parts of Afghan territory and of its people would not be taking place.

Therefore, we take this opportunity to once again express our disappointment over the attitude of the United Nations, which has thus far avoided straightforward mention of the Pakistani military presence and involvement in Afghanistan. The United Nations has not yet decided to investigate this specific matter and numerous other events, in spite of requests made by the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The term "private adventurers fighting for a cause" (ibid.) was, unfortunately, mentioned in the Secretary-General's report in reference to the Pakistani fighters in Afghanistan. This reminds us of another United Nations term used when the former Soviet Union's troops were present in Afghanistan. The United Nations did not dare express clearly then that the former Soviet Union had to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Rather, the United Nations used the term "foreign troops", which it said must withdraw from Afghanistan. The term "private adventurers" may have satisfied and may continue to satisfy some United Nations bureaucrats who, in line with the spirit prevailing during the cold-war era, wish to avoid offending sensibilities. However, in the light of the Pakistani military presence in Afghanistan, the people of Afghanistan and those still interested in the development of Afghanistan laugh at such a masquerade of demagoguery.

Regarding concerns as to the use of the Afghan territory for the training and harbouring of terrorists: for the past four years, from this very rostrum, we have warned the international community about the existence of terrorist training camps, established and operated in occupied parts of Afghanistan with the active involvement of the Pakistani military intelligence service, Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI). We are thankful to Mr. Norbert Holl, the former head of UNSMA, who in his 14 November 1997 report stated

> "United Nations employees also reported an encounter with an unidentified foreign military training unit of several hundred persons near Kabul." *(A/52/682, para. 18)*

Once theoretical training is completed, ISI provides practical training sessions for the terrorist trainees in these camps so they can participate in battles against the forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan. After acquiring sufficient knowledge and battle experience in Afghanistan — including by killing civilians — these terrorists are dispatched to other countries of the region and beyond.

The television footage after the Tomahawk missiles hit Afghanistan on 20 August showed that only Pakistani and some private Arab extremists were killed. By using Afghan soil as a terrorist training camp from which — through the utility of certain elements — war is declared against a third country, the Pakistani ISI has endangered the life and property of innocent Afghans. In fact, the cold-blooded murder of Lieutenant-Colonel Calo, the Italian Military Adviser to UNSMA, by designated Pakistanis in Kabul, the day after the Tomahawk missile attacks, presents a gloomy reality that requires deep pondering.

In addition, in his memorandum annexed to document A/53/539, dated 26 October 1998, the Special Rapporteur reported that 10 Iranian diplomats and the correspondent of the Islamic Republic News Agency were killed when Taliban forces and persons allied with them, described by the Rapporteur as "Punjabi Taliban", entered the Iranian Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif, on the first day of the Taliban takeover of the city, 8 August. The only Iranian survivor of the Mazar massacre able to reach his country testified that the leader of those who stormed the Iranian Consulate was conversing in the Pakistani Urdu language when giving instructions to the gang.

As regards concerns about the production and trafficking of drugs: in his statement on 8 June 1998 before the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, on the world drug problem, President Burhanuddin Rabbani of Afghanistan, on the basis of the teachings of Islam, declared drugs or substances harmful to the mind or the body as injurious to human beings, be they members of a Muslim or non-Muslim society, because "reason and intellect are gifts of God" (*A/S-20/PV.2, p. 17*). In his statement of 29 September before this Assembly, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mr. Abdullah, warned of an evil triangle haunting our region, a triangle between, first, the Pakistani military Inter-Service Intelligence; secondly, branches of international terrorism and Pakistani politico-military drug-traffickers; and, thirdly, the infamous Taliban mercenaries. Drug production in Taliban-held territories is estimated at more than 96.3 per cent of the total Afghan output. This increase is due to the institutionalization of a tax on poppy cultivation and exports by the Taliban, closely monitored by Pakistani traffickers as a lucrative business — maybe the only lucrative business in Pakistan.

Last year a state of euphoria was prevailing among some officials of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) as a result of the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Taliban, designed to reduce poppy production in Taliban-held areas. Pakistani mouthpieces and some United Nations officials were announcing with fanfare their success with the memorandum of understanding. Disappointingly, yet realistically, the same UNDCP officials have complained this year about a 9 per cent increase in the cultivable land devoted to poppy growing in the Taliban-controlled territories of Afghanistan.

As concerns the cultural heritage of Afghanistan: this year, acts of vandalism by the Taliban against the cultural heritage of Afghanistan have continued unabated. The looting and plunder of the national archives in the capital, Kabul, which had remained safe and intact despite years of foreign-sponsored proxy wars, resulted in many items being offered for sale by Pakistani traffickers in secret dealings.

The deliberate shelling of one of the two colossal Buddha statues in Bamyan — there are two colossal Buddhas in Bamyan — by the invading Taliban troops after they entered the city in September shocked the world. The burning down of Naser Khisraow-e-Balkhi Library in Pul-e-Khumry in November — a library that stored more than 55,000 volumes in the Persian language, along with many irreplaceable and original manuscripts — was a serious blow to the face of the human cultural heritage.

I draw the Assembly's attention to the declaration of Mr. Federico Mayor, the Director-General of UNESCO, in this matter.

With regard to concerns about the advocacy of a military solution to the Afghan conflict: opting for a military solution to the problem of Afghanistan by becoming an instrument of Pakistani regional hegemony, the Taliban continued their military occupation of Afghanistan. The Taliban's refusal to negotiate an internationally advocated political settlement with the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan left the intra-Afghan dialogue unfruitful. In May of this year, despite the Secretary-General's appeal to continue the negotiations, the Taliban unilaterally and abruptly abandoned the United Nations-supervised joint Steering Committee meeting held in Islamabad between the two conflicting sides.

Let us remember that Mr. Norbert Holl had already reported on the bellicose and warmongering attitude of the Taliban mercenaries. The Secretary-General's report of 16 March 1997 states,

> "The Taliban, judging both from their words and from their activities on the ground, appear determined to gain military and political control of the whole of Afghanistan and to establish their vision of an Islamic State." (*A/51/838, para. 7*)

The report indicated that many countries view this as a serious threat to their borders and to the peace and security of the region.

I would like to make a very brief comment about the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, dated 2 October 1998 (A/53/455). First, events in Afghanistan develop rapidly. The latest massive uprisings during October, November and December of this year throughout the Taliban-occupied territories of northern Afghanistan have put an end to the Taliban military drive which began in July 1998. As a result, many areas have been liberated. The massive participation and volunteer service by local populations in the occupied territories to assist the armed forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in their fight against Pakistani aggression and intervention, as well as against the Pakistani mercenaries called the Taliban, are the most distinctive characteristics of the new developments in Afghanistan. Awareness of the true nature of the Taliban as the military tool of Pakistan, however, is not limited only to the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras of the northern and central populations of Afghanistan, but exists also among the Pashtoons themselves in eastern and southern Afghanistan. Yet the two recent reports of the Secretary-General do not provide any insight or information about the affiliation of certain Pashtoon leaders with the leadership of the armed forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, which have recently liberated areas in the east.

We are thankful to Mr. Paik, the Special Rapporteur. Paragraph 32 of document E/CN.4/1998/71, of 12 March 1998, indicates that he was told that "the inhabitants of Kandahar city", headquarters of the Taliban and home to the Taliban leader, "were not trusted by the Taliban since the Taliban were viewed as occupiers by the people". This is significant because even Afghanistan's ethnic Pashtoons are suspicious of Taliban loyalty.

Secondly, placing equal blame on all Afghan leaders and all sides would be considered unjust and unfair in light of the realities in Afghanistan. The Islamic State of Afghanistan is defending its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and has all along declared its readiness to solve the conflict through peaceful means and negotiations. To equate the Islamic State of Afghanistan with the Taliban mercenary group is an insult and is also against the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of equality of Member States of the United Nations. We are not a faction, and calling us a faction would be inequitable. Equating the Islamic State of Afghanistan, which continues to defend its sovereignty while the Taliban, a mercenary force, are trying to implement the expansionist policy of Pakistan, is a slap in the face of human civilization. It is also the indissoluble right of an independent State to coexist in the family of nations, without any foreign coercion. It would be a blunder to consider instruments of tyranny, mercenaries of a foreign country, instigators of international terrorism, profiteers of illicit drugs, promoters of gender apartheid and champions of intolerance equal to civilized individuals such as those of us here. To equate justice with injustice means to side with injustice.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, by co-sponsoring this draft resolution, reconfirms its commitment to support the United Nations peace process. We highly value the efforts of the General Assembly and of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, aimed at bringing peace to Afghanistan and establishing a broad-based Government.

Before concluding, I ask the Assembly's indulgence to allow me briefly to update the contents of my statement, in the light of new events. In the first place, the Security Council adopted resolution 1214 (1998) yesterday evening, 8 December, on the situation in Afghanistan. The Islamic State of Afghanistan welcomes and expresses its support for this Security Council resolution and its commitment to cooperate fully towards its implementation.

Paragraph 15 of the Council resolution, which expresses the Council's readiness to consider the imposition of measures with the aim of achieving the full implementation of United Nations resolutions on Afghanistan, is of paramount importance.

Secondly, the Islamic State of Afghanistan welcomes the declaration of the Afghanistan Support Group's fourth annual meeting, held in Tokyo, Japan, on 7 and 8 December 1998, about which Ambassador Konishi just has given us some information, for which I am thankful. The participants in the Tokyo meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group supported the United Nations peace process and expressed their concern about the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the right of Afghan women and girls to education and employment.

I would like to conclude by expressing my delegation's sincere thanks to the German delegation for its untiring efforts to coordinate the work of preparing the draft resolution before us today. We are also grateful to all of the sponsors of the draft resolution. In addition, we are very grateful to all those Ambassadors and representatives who supported and underlined the importance of the draft resolution we will have to adopt today.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report of 23 November 1998, in document A/53/695, on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. The report, covering military, political, humanitarian and social developments in Afghanistan, shows that there have been both positive and negative developments in Afghanistan over the last year.

The most notable development this year has been the substantial change in the ground situation in Afghanistan following the take over by the Kabul authorities of Mazar-e-Sharif on 8 August 1998 and of Bamyan in central Afghanistan on 30 September 1998. According to the Secretary-General's report, as of September 1998, the Kabul authorities had taken control of most of the country, and the United Front, with the exception of the fighters under the command of Ahmed Shah Massoud, appears to have been largely eliminated as a viable force.

Pakistan does not favour a military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan and places the highest importance on endeavours for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan. It is encouraging that nearly 90 per cent of the area of Afghanistan which is under the control of the Kabul regime is now peaceful. There is a need to recognize this reality and to deal with the Kabul authorities, who are the effective Government in Afghanistan, in the interest of promoting and consolidating peace in that country. The tendency to turn way from this reality will neither serve the objective of restoring peace nor alleviate the extreme economic hardships which the Afghan people have been suffering on account of two decades of devastation caused first by the prolonged and brutal Soviet occupation and then by the power struggle among warlords.

Pakistan is deeply concerned over the killings of innocent women and children in the fratricidal conflict in Afghanistan. In particular, we are deeply concerned over the continued pounding of Kabul by the forces of Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud. According to the figures of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), a total of more than 130 rockets landed in the Kabul area during the period from 1 June to 20 October this year. The Secretary-General's report also reveals that on, 20 and 21 September 1998 alone, nine Luna rockets landed in a residential area in the city of Kabul, killing more than 190 people. These and other killings are regrettable and must stop immediately.

Pakistan has condemned the killings of the Iranian Consulate-General personnel in Mazar-e-Sharif this year, as well as the killings of two UNSMA officials, a Political Affairs Officer and a Deputy Military Adviser. We hope that those responsible for these killings will be brought to justice soon.

As a result of the killings of the UNSMA personnel, the United Nations suspended its activities in Afghanistan. However, following the signing of the Supplementary Protocol to the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on 24 October 1998, we now hope that the United Nations will resume its humanitarian activities in Afghanistan soon.

We note with regret that there have been many retaliatory killings in Afghanistan this year. In this context, we are deeply concerned that despite the explicit call by the General Assembly last year in its resolution 52/211, the United Nations has not completed its investigations into the killings of prisoners of war in and around Mazar-e-Sharif in 1997. Such inaction tarnishes the image of the United Nations as a neutral and impartial mediator.

We welcome the announcement by Kabul authorities in October this year that they would ban the production, transfer and sale of landmines. On the other hand, we deeply deplore the continued laying of mines by the northern alliance, as disclosed in the Secretary-General's report, resulting in casualties among innocent women and children. We are also concerned over the slow progress in mine clearance being carried out under the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan. We regret that only 23 square kilometres of mined areas have been cleared so far this year. In this context, I would like to recall our statement of last year in which we pointed out that, at the current rate, it would take another decade to rid the remaining 140 square kilometres of the high-priority mined areas, to say nothing of the real objective of demining the whole country. Into the bargain, another 30,000 Afghans would be killed by the millions of mines left behind by the Soviet forces and those planted in recent years. We again urge further concerted efforts and generous donations for mine-clearing programmes of the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations. Those who laid these mines and then walked away should be asked to provide maps of the mine fields, to facilitate mine-clearing efforts, to share the burden of the demining and, above all, to pay reparations to the families of the mine victims.

Among the positive developments this year has been the lifting of the blockade of the Hazarajat in central Afghanistan. We note with appreciation that, after the resumption of the supply of humanitarian assistance to Bamyan and other regions, the Afghans living in the central parts of Afghanistan will be able to sustain themselves during the winter season.

It is a matter of great disappointment to us that, as of last month, a mere $51 million, or less than one third of the $157 million required, have been pledged for projects in the 1998 Consolidated Appeal for Assistance to Afghanistan. This shows a lack of commitment on the part of the international community to address the plight of the common Afghan, who has continued to suffer since the invasion of his country by the Soviet Union in 1979 and then through the subsequent fratricidal civil war.

We are also concerned over the interlinkages being established between the progress on the gender issue and the supply of humanitarian assistance to the needy in Afghanistan. We all know that food reaches women and children through heads of families, who are mostly men in the traditional Afghan society. These conditionalities, therefore, can aggravate further the plight of hapless women and children of Afghanistan.

The people of Afghanistan are in need of substantial humanitarian supplies to sustain their livelihood. The Afghan economy has been completely destroyed by 10 years of struggle against the Soviet military intervention and the subsequent civil war. There is no hope of its revival without massive international assistance. For the moment, the Afghan people depend heavily on Pakistan for food and other essential items, which enable them to survive at subsistence level. Regardless of political considerations, the Member States must face up to this grave humanitarian challenge and provide, on a priority basis, all possible financial, technical and material assistance for the rebuilding and reconstruction of the war-ravaged country.

Pakistan welcomes the agreement between the Kabul authorities and the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention on the eradication of poppy cultivation. However, the Secretary-General's report shows that much needs to be done to rid the country of this menace. It is important for the success of this programme that the United Nations provide adequate resources to the Afghan authorities for their crop substitution programme. Unless this is done, it would be naive to think that poppy cultivation in Afghanistan can be brought under control in an effective manner.

The Afghan people have also suffered due to the devastating earthquakes in February and May this year. Pakistan was among the first countries to airlift relief supplies for the people of the affected areas. We note with satisfaction that, as part of the reconstruction effort, the United Nations is providing support for rebuilding some 15,000 homes.

The refugee situation remained largely unchanged this year. Pakistan continues to host about 1.5 million refugees. We are providing, and will continue to provide, succour to these refugees from our own meagre resources, as foreign assistance has largely dried up due to donor fatigue. This year only 86,000 Afghans voluntarily returned to their country from Pakistan, while about 1,600 returned from Iran. We note with regret and disappointment that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees's (UNHCR) repatriation programme has been badly undermined by the unprecedented funding crisis, which has led to the suspension of all organized group repatriation for the remainder of 1998. We therefore urge the international community to contribute generously for the repatriation and rehabilitation of the Afghan refugees, as this would demonstrate the dividends of peace to them.

A number of earnest efforts have been made this year to find a political settlement to the Afghan crisis. With the objective of jump-starting an intra-Afghan dialogue, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif convened a meeting of the Steering Committee of the Afghan parties in Islamabad from 26 April to 3 May 1998. However, differences between the two sides on a minor issue led to the breakdown of the talks.

We would like to place on record our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, his Special Envoy and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) for their concerted efforts for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

The Secretary-General convened seven meetings of the "six plus two" group and two meetings of the Group of 21, with the purpose of examining the developments in Afghanistan and of finding a lasting solution to the Afghan crisis. The ministerial- level meeting of the six plus two group on 21 September 1998 was particularly important, as it helped defuse a dangerous situation having implications for regional as well as international peace and security. We welcome the proposed meeting of the "six plus two" group in Tashkent. We are confident that the meeting will contribute to our collective goal of restoring peace in Afghanistan.

Special Envoy Ambassador Brahimi undertook two visits to Afghanistan and the region this year. His visit from 29 September to 25 October 1998 was particularly important since he was able to defuse the tension along the Afghanistan-Iran border. His decision to visit Kandahar was a bold one. It enabled him to take up directly with the supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, the demands of the "six plus two" group contained in the points of common understanding agreed on 21 September 1998. It facilitated the release of all Iranian prisoners and the return of the dead bodies of the personnel of the Iranian Consulate- General killed in Mazar-e-Sharif. Mullah Omar expressed his regrets over the death of the Iranians and conveyed his grief to the bereaved families. He indicated the readiness of the Taliban authorities to cooperate with an international investigation into the reported mass killings and discovery of mass graves of Taliban fighters in Mazar-e-Sharif in 1997, as well as the recent claims and reports of mass killings. Mullah Omar also agreed that Iran and the Kabul authorities should meet at a mutually agreeable time and place, such as the OIC headquarters at Jeddah or the United Nations offices in Geneva, Vienna or New York, to iron out their differences. Pakistan welcomes these positive results of Ambassador Brahimi's visit. We are confident that he will build on these achievements in the future.

The Kabul authorities have expressed their readiness to broaden the ethnic dispensation of their Government. They were, however, of the view that the defeated and discredited warlords should not be allowed any role in the political process of the country, as these warlords were responsible for Afghanistan's continuing tragedy.

Pakistan supports the Secretary-General's intention, with the consent of the Taliban and other relevant Afghan parties, to add a new monitoring function to UNSMA, with the primary objective of promoting respect for minimum humanitarian standards and deterring the recurrence of massive and systematic violations of human rights in the future.

Despite some positive developments this year, much needs to be done to steer the country out of the devastation of a protracted conflict and to put it on the track of reconciliation, progress and prosperity. The people of Afghanistan deserve peace after seeing the plundering of their country as a result of prolonged Soviet occupation and the subsequent internal power struggle among the Afghan factions.

We believe that there is a window of opportunity now for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan. However, this would be possible only if there were a cessation of all outside interference in Afghanistan. The recent impounding by the Kyrgyz authorities of a trainload of weapons destined for Ahmed Shah Masood, 700 tons according to some sources, shows that massive arms supplies continue to be smuggled into Afghanistan.

The neighbours of Afghanistan should also work for the restoration of peace and harmony in Afghanistan instead of raising alarms over an imaginary threat. We are encouraged by the pronouncements made by the Kabul authorities that their agenda was purely domestic and that it posed no threat to any neighbouring country. The aim of our efforts should be to establish a relationship of trust and confidence with them and to avoid seeking pretexts for interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Pakistan's consistent policy has been the promotion of a peaceful and negotiated settlement in Afghanistan. In order to achieve this objective, Pakistan has continued constructive engagement with all parties to the conflict. No country has suffered more than Pakistan over the last 19 years due to the conflict in Afghanistan, other than Afghanistan itself. We are still looking after 1.5 million Afghan refugees almost single-handedly. Pakistan has also suffered from the spillover of drug-trafficking, illicit arms-smuggling and terrorism as a result of conditions inside Afghanistan.

Before concluding, let me briefly turn to the draft resolution on Afghanistan before the General Assembly today. It is unfortunate that the draft resolution paints a pessimistic picture of the situation in Afghanistan, despite the fact that there is peace today in nearly 90 per cent of that country. The overall tone and tenor of the draft resolution is biased against one party to the conflict.

The most conspicuous omission in this context is the absence of any reference to the ongoing shelling of Kabul by the forces of Ahmed Shah Masood, despite the fact that this has been mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. Such omissions do not serve well the image of the United Nations as an impartial mediator.

The draft resolution is replete with the phrase "in particular the Taliban". This makes it lopsided and biased, giving the impression that the violence and the social evils in Afghanistan are due only to the Taliban.

The draft resolution mentions ethnic and religious persecution, particularly against the Shiites. This is not substantiated by realities on the ground. We have not come across any recent confirmed reports about sectarian persecution. On the contrary, Ustad Akbari, one of the most important Shiite leaders, along with others from Hizb-e-Wahdat, have joined the Taliban, as has the Uzbek commander Nasim Mahdhi. They are at present talking to the Taliban, and there are good prospects for their being offered key positions in the Government.

The reference to the convening of a *Loya Jirgah* betrays an ignorance of Afghan traditions. A *Loya Jirgah* can be convened only by the Afghans. The requirement is that it be held inside Afghan territory in times of national emergency. This means that there has to be consensus. A *Loya Jirgah* cannot be convened by a handful of Afghan parties and personalities. It is a purely Afghan affair, without any advice or promotion by outside parties or entities.

The Taliban have admitted that the killing of the Iranian personnel in Mazar-e-Sharif was carried out by renegade elements of their militia. The formulation in operative paragraph 12 gives the impression that the unfortunate incident was the outcome of a deliberate Taliban policy decision.

The Taliban authorities have officially imposed a ban on the promotion, transport and sale of landmines. In contrast, landmines are being laid by the northern alliance, as reflected in Secretary-General's report. There is no reference to this in the draft resolution.

Due to these serious shortcomings, we dissociate ourselves from the consideration of the draft resolution before the General Assembly today. We cannot be a party to a draft resolution that attempts to isolate and alienate one party while ignoring the atrocities committed by the other, that overlooks the nascent but significant positive trends towards stability emerging in a situation of extreme and prolonged tragedy and that lacks emphasis on addressing the acute humanitarian needs of the Afghan population.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): While I greatly appreciate the requests by many delegations that draft resolution A/53/L.66 be adopted today, I should like to inform members of the Assembly that in order to allow time for the review of the programme budget implications, action on the draft resolution will be taken at a later date, to be announced.

Programme of work

Postponement of date of recess

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to draw the attention of members to a matter relating to the date of recess of the current session.

Members will recall that at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 15 September 1998, the General Assembly decided that the fifty-third session should recess on 11 December 1998.

However, as the Fifth Committee will continue its work until next week, the Assembly will therefore not be able to conclude its work on Friday, 11 December 1998. I should like, therefore, to propose to the Assembly that it postpone its date of recess until Thursday, 17 December 1998.

If I hear no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.